

**An Analysis of the Legitimacy and Effectiveness of *Salafee*
Scholarship as an Antidote to Extremism**

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*'I declare that **An Analysis of the Legitimacy and Effectiveness of Salafee Scholarship as an Antidote to Extremism** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.*

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software. The result summary is attached.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.'

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Abstract:

The label *Salafee-Jihaadee* has been used to categorize Islamic groups that espouse violence against the West and Muslim regimes. The typology of *Salafee-Jihaadee* is met with vehement disapproval and criticism from adherents to *Salafism*. For this reason, the portrayal of *Salafees* as violent extremists requires scrutiny.

This study aims to make a unique contribution to knowledge of *Salafism* by surveying an extensive literature review, supplemented by interviews of known *Salafee* clerics based upon the premise that *Salafism* is an antidote to Islamic extremism rather than a cause of violent *jihaad* and terror.

Furthermore, this research aims to offer new insight into existing literature and theory regarding *Salafism*. By re-examining current theory this research attempts to show that *Salafism* is an antidote to violent extremism. Therefore, there is a clear need to explore the relationship between *Salafism*, violent extremism, and *takfeerism*.

In chapter one *Salafism* is defined and its key features as a movement are characterized and evaluated. Chapter two analyzes *Salafees'* view and role in denouncing violence and extremism. Chapter three introduces alternative assessments of *Salafism* as a movement and evaluates the arguments put forth by its critics. Chapter four investigates *Salafist* perceptions of pluralism particularly in Western non-Muslim societies. Chapter five details the role of *Salafees* and their counter arguments to extremism. The final chapter details the conclusions of the research, which indicate that *Salafism* is not a precursor to violence, but rather the efforts of *Salafee* scholars offer effective counter-narratives to the *jihaadee-takfeeree* paradigm.

Commonly Used Terms

Ahl al-Sunna

Counter-narrative

Extremist

Jihaadee

Manhaj

Salafee

Salafism

Shaikh

Takfeer

Terrorism

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System of Transliteration¹

ء	'		ض	<u>D</u>
ب	B		ط	<u>T</u>
ت	T		ظ	<u>Th</u>
ث	Th		ع	،
ج	J		غ	Gh
ح	<u>H</u>		ف	F
خ	Kh		ق	Q
د	D		ك	K
ذ	Dh		ل	L
ر	R		م	M
ز	Z		ن	N
س	S		ه	H
ش	Sh		و	W
ص	<u>s</u>		ي	Y

اَ	a		آ	Aa
اُ	u		أُ	Oo
اِ	i		إِ	Ee

و	Aw
ي	Ai

¹ Transliteration Chart from the book The Exorcist Tradition in Islaam (Philips 1997:iv)

Glossary of Terms

Ahl al-Hadeeth: Reference to scholars of the *hadeeth* sciences who primarily adhere to a more literal approach in understanding Islamic texts.

Al-Ra'yy: A methodology of textual analysis that gives preference to analogy, intended purpose, and logic to deduce *sharee'a* rulings.

Al-wala'a wa al-bara'a: The concept of loving what Allah loves according to the Qur'an and - and disavowal of polytheism and non-Muslims.

Bid'a: Heresy, which is of two types: one that causes a Muslim to be excommunicated from the faith, and the other type, which is considered blameworthy and sinful.

Fatwa: Religious ruling issued by Muslim cleric.

Fiqh: Jurisprudence

Hizbeeya: Blind partisanship based upon un-Islamic principles.

Hizbee: Practitioner of partisanship.

Ijtihad: Jurisprudent reasoning.

Mathhab: Jurisprudential school of thought.

Manhaj: Methodology of understanding Islam and its textual evidences. Also, the term is a reference for the methodology of propagation.

Modernists: Those Muslim thinkers and academics who generally take a more secular approach towards understanding Islam. They tend to shun literalism and tend to be more socially liberal regarding *sharee'a* maxims such as *hijab*, polygamy, and the role of *sharee'a* in contemporary settings.

Salafee: A Muslim who adheres in creed and methodology to the understanding of the first three generations of Muslims.²

Salafism: A contemporary descriptor for the creed and methodology of the first generation of Muslims.

Shi'a: Non-Sunni community of Muslims that claim that 'Alee should have been the rightful leader of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet (saw). The

² Commonly Anglicized words like words like Allah, Islam, Qur'an will retain those spellings and differ with the transliteration system used in this research.

Shi'a are comprised of a vast sectarian tradition and generally considered unorthodox by *Sunni* jurists.

Shirk: Polytheism or polytheistic belief as considered by Islamic texts.

Sunna: Statements, actions, habitual practices of the Prophet (saw) recorded in authenticated *hadeeth* literature.

Sunni: One who practices Islam according to *Sunna* traditions. *Salafees* use this term to denote those who practice the *Salafee* methodology and at other times to denote those within the broad *Sunni* tradition which excludes *Shi'a*.

Taabi'een: The scholars who met and acquired knowledge from a Companion of the Prophet (saw).

Takfeer: The creed of declaring a Muslim to be an apostate.

Tawheed: Islamic monotheism

Taqleed: Blind following a school of thought or individual without regard to the soundness of the individual's opinion and accepting it as *sharee'a* evidence.

Abbreviations

CVE: Centre for Violent Extremism

ISIS/ISIL: Islamic State group headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, known for its brutality and uncompromising application of, what they believe, to be Islamic law.

Saw: Abbreviation meaning may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, which is written after the name of the Prophets. Example: the Prophet (saw).

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	3
TRANSLITERATION TABLE	4
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
INTRODUCTION CHAPTER	9
Personal Insight on the Topic	9
Literature Review	10
Primary Sources	12
Secondary Sources	14
Research Problem	16
Research Questions	17
Research Methodology	18
Limitations of Research	19
Chapters	20
CHAPTER ONE: SALAFEE CREED AND METHODOLOGY	22
Definition and Meaning of <i>Salafism</i>	22
Principles of <i>Salafism</i>	27
Creed	35
Names of <i>Ahl al-Sunna</i>	42
Reference to <i>Salaf</i> in <i>Hadeeth</i>	44
Methodology	45
Jurisprudence	47
<i>Mathhabs</i> and <i>Taqleed</i>	47
Rationalism and <i>Mathhab al-Ra'yy</i>	52
Differences	54
Reasons for Differences	56
Examples of How <i>Ahl al-Sunna</i> Dealt with Errors	56
<i>Hizbeeya</i>	58
Characteristics of <i>Hizbeeya</i>	60
Problems with Contemporary Classifications	61
<i>Jihaadee-Takfeeree</i> Paradigm	68
Conclusion	71
CHAPTER TWO: SALAFEES VIEW ON RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM	72
Extremism According to <i>Salafee</i> Scholars	72
Defining Terrorism	74
ISIS on the Scale	76
Differences with <i>Salafee Manhaj</i>	80
Scholars of the ISIS	89
ISIS's Methodological Contradictions	92
ISIS and <i>Salafee</i> Sources	94
Tactical Goals of <i>al-Qaeda</i>	94
<i>Salafee</i> Role in Online Anti-Terror Propaganda	100
Statements Denouncing Extremism	101

Statements Debunking ISIS	112
Efforts of the Saudi State	114
Conclusion	117
CHAPTER THREE: CRITICS OF SALAFISM	119
Introduction	119
<i>Salafism</i> as Violent Ideology	119
Common Criticisms of <i>Salafism</i>	121
Skeptics and Inept Criticisms	127
Orientation of Muslim Critics	133
Contrasts in Exegesis and Methodology	142
Contrasts in Creed	146
Internal Dissention	149
Problems with Typology	151
ISIS and the Saudi State	155
Anti- <i>Shiism</i>	158
Internal Polemics	159
Wiktorowicz's typology	162
In Defense of the <i>Salafee Manhaj</i>	164
Conclusion	166
CHAPTER FOUR: SALAFEE PERCEPTIONS OF WESTERN SOCIETIES	168
Introduction	168
Islam and Democracy	170
Paradigm Shift	176
<i>Salafee</i> Perspective	177
Pluralism	179
Secularism	181
Muslim Minorities	182
<i>Fiqh</i> for Muslim Minorities	186
Perspectives on <i>Hijra</i>	189
<i>Salafees</i> and the Propensity for Violence	194
Conclusion	197
CHAPTER FIVE: Assessing <i>Salafees</i>	199
How Extremists' Recruit and Their <i>Da'wa</i>	200
Counter-narrative and De-radicalization	204
Evaluating Counter-narratives	210
Transition to Radicalism	212
The <i>Salafee</i> Response to Radicalism	214
Academic Cynics	218
Proponents	223
Case Study of sahab.net	225
Conclusion	233
Chapter Six: Research Conclusions	235
Key Findings of Research	245
Recommendations for Further Research	246
BIBLIOGRAPHY	249

Introduction

The time in which we live, is one of great political turmoil, economic uncertainty and rising political violence. The common narrative held by the media and intelligence agencies, both Western and Eastern, is that the root cause behind 'Islamic' extremism and political violence is *Salafism*. However, this research project will argue that this does not offer an adequate explanation, nor seem accurate when scrutinizing empirical data, *Salafee* literature and religious doctrine, thus requiring further analysis into the phenomenon of 'Islamic radicalism' and *Salafism*.

Personal Insight on the Topic

My personal interest in the topic is due primarily to three reasons. Firstly, having studied under several leading *Salafee* scholars has given me a personal connection and insight into the topic. Secondly, my association with *Salafee* principles and creed makes me feel an urgency to investigate further the many claims against the movement. Thirdly, I have personally known several persons who were affected by radical ideologies, resulting in their imprisonment, and in some cases their becoming informants for Western intelligence agencies.

Literature Review

Although there is literature outlining *Salafee* theology with analysis of contemporary extremist ideology of groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS, and al-Shabaab, there does not appear to be extensive research into contemporary *Salafism* and its role in denouncing political violence. This proposed project aims to fill the gap in literature through interviews, and analysis of pre-existing English resources with an emphasis on Arabic literature.

An analysis of these precepts can be useful in determining whether *Salafism* is as accommodating of political and social contexts, and pluralism as its adherents claim, or if instead, it is the foundation of violent extremism, as most media and policy makers tend to assume.

Building on the work of Baker (2011), Lambert (2011) and the applicant's own master's dissertation (2009) this PhD research project will explore the Islamic basis on which *Salafees* act as antidotes to al-Qaeda and related terrorist propaganda. Whereas Baker and Lambert focus primarily on the UK, this research will have an international and transnational remit, centered on Saudi Arabia. Interviews will be conducted with significant *Salafee* scholars with a view to establishing the legitimacy and effectiveness of interventions by *Salafee* scholars against al-Qaeda propagandists and related extremists such as Anwar al-Awlaki. In doing so, the

research will engage closely with the ground-breaking work of Michot (2006).³ Interviews will be supplemented and supported by an analysis of literature produced by both *Salafee* scholars, al-Qaeda, and related extremists. Much of the literature being reviewed has not previously been translated into English and many of the interviewees have not previously been interviewed in a research context. This is the basis on which the research thesis will aim to fill a vacuum in current scholarship and add an Islamic perspective to complement and develop important work by al-Qaeda and Saudi specialists such as Hegghammer (2006), Wictorowicz (2006) and Lia (2007).

Labeling and categorizing a social movement like *Salafism* can be difficult due to the various definitions and understandings of who is a legitimate *Salafee* and what makes a Muslim *Salafee*. However, as authors like Haykel suggest, “It is nonetheless well-established that the Salafis [*sic*] claim to be engaged in a process of purifying Muslim society in accordance with their teachings, and that the designation Salafi [*sic*] is prestigious among Muslims because it denotes the earliest and therefore authentic version of Islam...” (2013). As Haykel suggests association with the *Salaf* carries a certain degree of prestige and legitimacy with it and the term is derived from *hadeeth* literature. Haykel also raises important research issues, which this research will attempt to answer. He states,

“But beyond these facts it would be useful to know why the term Salafi [*sic*], which in the late nineteenth century referred to modernizing and reason-minded Muslim reformist scholars, has come to be identified with the

³ Michot's analysis of Ibn Taimeeya's verdicts show how extremists often misappropriate his ideas to justify violence.

Wahhabis for whom reason-based (*‘aql*) arguments are anathema. What is the difference, if any, between a Salafi [*sic*] and a Wahhabi? [*sic*] How old is the term Salafi [*sic*] as a designation for a particular group or movement among Muslims?” (2013).

The primary sources of this research project will be *Salafee* texts, speeches, and interviews, which will then be translated into English. Primary sources will be scrutinized to understand and contextualize the origins of modern day *Salafism* as a movement. Also, these sources can provide insight into the creed and methodology as propounded by *Salafee* clerics who head the movement.

Additionally, critical analysis of the politico’s texts and speeches will be analyzed to make the case that their ideology and movement have important fundamental differences which must be considered when scrutinizing *Salafism* and referencing *Salafee* scholarship.

Secondary sources used in this research will consist of academic articles and texts written about *Salafism*, extremism, and counter-terrorism policy.

Primary Sources

Shaikh al-Albanee’s collection of religious verdicts (2010) is a critical source with a collection of over 600 transcribed audio cassettes and religious verdicts. This compilation offers critical insight into modern *Salafism* because al-Albanee is considered one of the revivers of *Salafee* thought in the 20th century. He is also known as one of the greatest contemporary scholars in the science of *hadeeth* study. This collection details the creed and methodology for understanding Islam according to contemporary *Salafees*. Further, it illustrates a proactive response to *jihadee-takfeeree* ideology. In contemporary times, al-Albanee’s *fatwa* regarding the use of the term *Salafee* as a descriptor is often cited by *Salafees* as evidence for the obligation to use that term to distinguish oneself from heterodoxy and heretical practices. This compilation will be referenced throughout the research due

to its extensive detail of the *Salafee* creed from one of the leading contemporary scholars of *Salafism*.

Bin Baz, the former *muftee* of Saudi Arabia, also referred to as the *Imaam* of *Ahl al-Sunna* in contemporary times by *Salafees*, details *Salafee* thought through his compilation of religious verdicts (2000). In addition, his verdicts criticize *takfeeree-jihaadee* principles illustrating how *Salafism* rejects the use of suicide bombers and shuns violence in general as a means of reform. This collection of verdicts, like al-Albanee's, comprises of both creed and methodology for understanding *Salafee* propagation.

Another important collection of religious verdicts detailing both creed and methodology is that of *Shaikh* Muhammad al-'Uthaimeen's (2013). This work forms many of the common assumptions of this research: extremism and terrorism are alien to Islamic thought and that *Salafee* methodology is a means of reform.

An additional critical compilation of religious verdicts that will be relied upon in this study is that of *Shaikh* Rabee'a al-Madkhalee (2013). Al-Madkhalee's verdicts detail how *Salafees* interact with other groups, as well as the parameters for determining whether someone is *Salafee*. The author is often accused by his critics of being harsh and excessive in declaring others to be unorthodox in approach. The *Shaikh's* books are some of the most extensive and detailed works regarding *Salafee* creed, methodology, and refutations of extremist ideologies.

Shaikh Ahmed al-Najmee's *fatwa* collection (2009) is also of great benefit and very influential in grasping what is meant by *manhaj* or methodology in contemporary *Salafee* literature. Al-Najmee's work concentrates on many conceptual theories pertaining to methodology.

Shaikh Muqbil al-Waadi'ee's *fatwa* collection (2013), although he is a Yemeni scholar, is also immensely influential in detailing *Salafee* creed and methodology for

understanding and propagating Islam. The *Shaikh's* former institute *Daar al-Hadeeth* in Damaaj, Yemen, has graduated thousands of students from all over the world, and any study of contemporary global *Salafism* and methodology would be incomplete without analyzing the *Shaikh's* contribution.

Secondary Sources

Critical to understanding many of the contemporary assumptions and the categorization by academics of *Salafees* is Wiktorowicz's work (2006). Most contemporary studies of *Salafism* rely upon Wiktorowicz's classification system with few challenging his basic supposition that *Salafees* and *Jihaadees* can be linked together. These assumptions of Wiktorowicz will be explored and critiqued during this research. Some of the main claims posited by Wiktorowicz are:

1. *Salafees* represent a diverse community with a common creed
2. *Salafees* reject Islamic pluralism
3. *Salafees* share a common approach to religious jurisprudence but often interpret contemporary politics and conditions differently
4. *Salafees* share common creed but differ over explanations of contemporary world problems which in turn leads to different solutions;
5. *Salafees* believe that the application of human intellect and logic to original sources are dangerous and there is no room for interpretive differences;
6. the various *Salafee* factions are all tied to the same educational network.

The doctrine of loyalty and disloyalty, a very controversial topic, is one of the important pillars of the *Salafee* creed and researchers like Bin Ali (2012) claim that it perpetuates an extremist world view and encourages inter-communal violence. Bin Ali's research offers understanding into one of the root causes of religious extremism, analyzing both *takfeeree* and *Salafee* discourses. The work also illustrates the gradation of the various interpretations of the concept of loyalty and disloyalty and how each interpretation varies with regards to its stance towards violence. Bin Ali's hypothesis is well argued, however it still relies upon the accepted categorization used by many in Western academia without challenging the assumed spectrum of *Salafism*: pacifist, politico, and violent. Based upon this

categorization he concludes that *Salafee* constructs of disavowal are problematic, hostile, and out of sync with contemporary globalization.

Wagemakers (2013) looks at the transformation of the concept of loyalty and disavowal stating that it is a radical conception. The work analyses loyalty and disavowal from a historical perspective as practiced amongst Arab tribes and concludes it is a pre-Islamic concept. The study posits that it was initially viewed by Hanbalees as religious innovation, and that Ibn Taimeeya broke with the Hanbalee view and adapted the concept to become something positive in order to preserve religious tradition and orthodoxy. Furthermore, he claims that Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhaab and later al-Maqdissee followed and expounded upon Ibn Taimeeya's thoughts. He concludes by including al-Maqdissee within the same *Salafee* tradition as the fore mentioned scholars with the exception that al-Maqdissee made loyalty and disavowal central to his ideology. Although useful in tracing the theory conceptually and historically the inclusion of radical *jihadists* like al-Maqdissee into the broader *Salafee* tradition is problematic as it, like many of the texts surveyed for this research, contains assumptions and categorizations which do not accurately depict *Salafist* doctrine.

Another useful resource is Ashraf's PhD thesis (2012) on the ideology of al-Qaeda. He argues that al-Qaeda's ideology can only be understood by gaining an understanding of current political crises in the Middle East and Muslim grievances as articulated by fundamentalists. He concludes that al-Qaeda has no clear ideology but instead an unclear political agenda. This work supports the assumption that al-Qaeda should not be considered a *Salafee* movement or trend in *Salafism*. The research outlines the political dogma of al-Qaeda, which it asserts is only framed in religious terms. The study shows that the grievances of al-Qaeda tend to be more political in origin than religious.

Finally, Weeks (2012) raises an important question: do current UK counter-terrorist strategies increase safety or contribute to radicalization of Muslims? The work

explores how counter-terrorism policy can lead to adverse policy results. This study, like Lambert's, gauges models of cooperation between Western intelligence agencies and *Salafee* communities, set in the context of the UK.

By questioning the common narrative that *Salafees* are responsible for political violence in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Somalia, we can begin to uncover the ideology behind the rhetoric, identify the true perpetrators of political violence, and what factors influence them. Answering these questions can assist in forming effective counter-terrorism policy, as well as offer more in-depth analysis into the *Salafee* creed and methodology, which can benefit academics.

Research Problem

The research problem identified in this study is that *Salafee* Islam has been misconstrued and incorrectly categorized as a violent ideology, which consists of a pacifist dormant strand, a politico strand, and a violent *jihaadist* strand, with the latter being the ideology most attributable to violent *takfeeree* extremists.

There are many advantages to acquiring a more precise understanding regarding the relationship between *Salafism*, extremist ideology and political violence.

First, accurate information aids both academics and intelligence agencies, by identifying perpetrators and potential perpetrators of political violence, and assists in formulating anti-terror strategy.

Second, factual information gives media better tools of recognizing terror suspects and aids in more accurate dissemination of information and quality reporting.

Third, accurate data helps policy makers in formulating more effective counter-terrorist policies with less risk of alienating whole groups or minority communities who are adversely affected by inaccurate intelligence and group profiling.

Fourth, by accurately identifying the ideology of perpetrators and propagators of extremist beliefs governments can prevent the criminalization and marginalization of Muslims internationally, and Muslim minority communities in Western countries.

This study aims to identify and scrutinize *Salafee* scholarship, doctrine and literature, both early and contemporary, with a focus on the concept of *jihaad*, peaceful coexistence in non-Muslim societies, secularism and democracy, and violent political protest.

Research Questions

This research aims to investigate whether *Salafees* offer solutions to political violence, Islamic radicalization, and whether their scholarship counter-balances extremist propaganda internationally, since scholars in both Saudi Arabia and Yemen have tremendous influence on *Salafee* communities worldwide. In addition, this research aims to explore how, and to what extent, *Salafee* scholars counter radicalism in Muslim communities internationally, and to scrutinize groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda to determine whether they are in fact *Salafee* in their ideology, as they are commonly classified. In addition, this research examines the following questions in the process of investigating the problem:

1. Is it correct to classify *Salafee* Islam into various ideological strands?
2. Does *Salafee* Islam encourage violent extremism and the radicalization of new converts?
3. Is *Salafee* Islam a new ideology or trend within the broader Islamic tradition?
4. What role if any does *Salafee* Islam play in countering violent extremism and proponents of violent *jihaad*?
5. Can *Salafee* Islam operate in a pluralistic society where Muslims are the minority?

The aims of this research are as follows:

1. to find out if *Salafism* is a solution to extremist ideology
2. attempt to provide a framework in which to authenticate *Salafism* and distinguish it from other religious trends
3. to identify key proponents of *Salafism*

4. to critically analyze the categorization of *Salafism* commonly held by academics and detractors of *Salafism*; therefore, this research attempts to highlight some inherent flaws of this classification.

The main benefit of exploring this research topic is that it can be a tool for analyzing *Salafism* as a movement adding to the gap in literature as well as rethinking and challenging existing assumptions that *Salafees* espouse violence and contribute to the rise in global extremism.

This problem is important:

- due to the controversy surrounding *Salafees* and their portrayal as violent extremists and radicals,
- to clarify the *Salafee* role and position in countering radicalism and scrutinize the effectiveness of their approaches and methodology in countering extremism,
- to see if there are common grounds and ways of forging new models of cooperation with the global *Salafee* movement in combating radicalism by further exploring the work of Helmus, York, and Chalk (2011) and the findings of Spalek and McDonald (2012),
- in providing firsthand experience and an insider's view of global *Salafee* involvement in countering extremist ideology.

Research Methodology

I propose to address the problem by extensive investigation into *Salafist* literature, websites, and audios as well as conduct personal interviews with leading *Salafee* scholars and clerics. In addition, the research will attempt to quantify the percentage of speeches *Salafee* clerics devote to refuting other sects and violent extremists. The means of testing these questions will be through analyzing sermons, lectures, and *Salafee* literature both in Arabic and English. Also, interviews will be conducted with leading *Salafee* scholars exploring questions of their ideology, stance on radicalism, their role in countering extremism, and their perception of their effectiveness. In addition, this study will investigate questions of cooperation with Western intelligence agencies in countering terrorism and the parameters for doing so.

Finally, an analysis of how *Salafee* scholars employ the science of jurisprudence fundamentals and terminologies will be analyzed to broaden the understanding of apparent contextual differences and diversity throughout the *Salafee* movement.

Feasibility

The researcher has the unique advantage of having both studied formally and informally in Yemen and Saudi Arabia with some of the world's leading *Salafee* scholars, who play a prominent role in the dissemination of the *Salafee* paradigm. Possessing fluency in the Arabic language, and currently residing in Saudi Arabia give the applicant unique access to various scholars in both countries making it very feasible to complete the proposed study, as well as add significant insight and experience to the proposed research project.

Limitations of Research

Some clerics might feel apprehensive and resistant to involvement in the study, as it might be perceived as invasive and treated with suspicion. This would thus limit the sample of subjects to be interviewed and reduce the intended outcome of the research.

Another limitation of this research is that much of the analysis and literature that will be reviewed is that of what is commonly classified as the *Salafee* purists since they fit the criterion and set parameters, which define *Salafism*. Part of the research question explored here is whether it is fair to, in fact, classify other groups as *Salafee* at all?

Chapters

In chapter one *Salafism* is defined by outlining the creed and methodology as articulated by *Salafee* scholars to offer insight into how some of the most prominent *Salafees* see themselves. In addition, the literalist methodology commonly associated with *Salafees* is explored and its effects upon textual interpretation. This chapter attempts to lay down the foundation for determining parameters of *Salafism*, which will later serve as a criterion for judging certain actors and movements relevant to this analysis of extremist ideology.

Chapter two explores the role of *Salafees* in denouncing terror and religious extremism by analyzing sermons and statements of *Salafee* scholars regarding groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Chapter three looks at the views of critics of *Salafism* and the role think tanks play in classifying *Salafees* into politicians, *jihadists*, and pacifists, and the implications of those taxonomies. The putative classification is critiqued and challenged, and the researcher's observations are given at the end of the chapter.

Chapter four discusses *Salafee* perceptions of Western societies and the status of Muslim minorities. Pluralism and democracy are also critiqued from a *Salafee* perspective to determine if there is a correlation between *Salafee* discourse and extremist views.

In chapter five observations will be drawn with a critical evaluation of the data presented and an overall assessment of *Salafee* scholarship as an anecdote to extremism in hopes that this will further contribute to the growing body of literature on *Salafism* by offering more relevant and substantial tools for classifying and identifying radical extremists within the Muslim community.

Chapter six will encapsulate the study by discussing its key findings and lessons learned throughout the research. Finally, the chapter will discuss limitations of the research and offer suggestions for further study.

Chapter One: *Salafee* Creed and Methodology

Definition of *Salafism*

Salafees are often perceived as extremely dogmatic due to the exclusivity of their views and practices. While this researcher concurs they exhibit exclusivity in their *manhaj* it must be acknowledged that they repudiate violent extremism. Similar to many non-violent Christian movements, like the Amish, they may not seem mainstream in their approach; however, in general they do not espouse violence. This is why during the course of this study it is hoped to determine their role as an antidote to violent extremism. *Salafism*, often referred to as the *Salafee manhaj* (methodology) or *da'wa* (call), is a complete belief system and practice aiming to adhere to the creed and methodology of the earliest Muslim community (*Salaf*). To understand *Salafees'* paradigm and accurately comprehend their religious orientation, it is necessary to look at how they view themselves and their *da'wa*. *Shaikh* Muqbil al-Waadi'ee argues, "The founder of the *Salafee da'wa* is the Messenger of Allah (saw). The ascription to this *da'wa* is not like the association of the *hizbees* (partisan groups). Its whole purpose is to actualize in practice these esteemed attributes in the one who ascribes to it" (al-Qaleesee 2015:15). *Salafee* scholars are insistent that their *da'wa* is distinguished from other groups and methodologies by claiming its origin stems directly from the Prophet's (saw) *da'wa*. *Shaikh* al-Dh_uafeeree states, "The *Salafee manhaj* is not a man-made ideology that developed due to new ways of thinking and advancement like other ideologies and belief systems advanced by man, going through various stages: a stage of origin, then being spread, then another stage of progression" (2013:74).⁴ *Salafees* see their *da'wa* as the only acceptable propagation of Islam, which they claim,

⁴ Critics like Wiktorowicz allege, "*Salafees* frequently exhibit the arrogance of scientific certitude. Because theirs is only one straight path and saved sect, the *Salafee* creed and method are seen as inexorably producing the "correct "Islamic understanding" (2005:5). *Salafees* do not claim to be pluralistic and accommodating towards other sects and ideologies; however, the question remains are they violent and do they espouse violence? This is one of the research questions that will be explored throughout this research.

emanates from the Prophet's (saw) *da'wa* based upon principles derived from the Qur'an and *Sunna*. *Shaikh* al-'Uthaimeen asserts that the *Salafee da'wa* is:

the most authentic *da'wa*, because it does not contradict the sacred texts. It is the most knowledge-based path because the *Salaf* took their creed from the Book of Allah and the *Sunna* of His Messenger (saw). Moreover, it is the wisest path because they took the way they were obligated to take, based upon the literal meaning of the texts (al-Qaleesee 2015:21).

The general perception of most Muslims, with the exception of some *Shi'a* sects, is that the ascription to the earliest generations of Muslims is praiseworthy. *Salafees* view that ascription as an absolute necessity for Islamic legitimacy. Ibn Taimeeya asserts, "There is no harm for those who exemplify the *mathhab* of the *Salaf*, ascribe to it, and associate to it. Rather, it is an obligation to accept that from them by consensus because the *mathhab* of the *Salaf* is indisputably the truth" (2006:47). The crux of the *Salafee* argument is that the way of the *Salaf* is binding upon all Muslims to follow and ascribe to. Furthermore, that the understanding and practice of the Companions, the leaders of the *Salaf*, form an infallible system.⁵ Bin Baz, the former *muftee* of Saudi Arabia, was asked if it was from arrogance, or self-praise to call oneself a *Salafee*, and he responded, "If he is really *Salafee* then no problem. Similarly, the *Salaf* used to say: he is *Salafee* or so and so is *Atharee*" (al-Fawzaan 2011:87). Another renowned scholar of *Salafism*, *Shaikh* Ahmad al-Najmee, states, "*Salafism* is an attribution to the *Salaf*. The *Salaf* denotes the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and their followers from the first three generations. Also, those who follow them in righteousness, then this is the concept of *Salafism*" (2004 p.72).

⁵ This does not mean the Companions are considered infallible; however, their methodology and those issues that they had consensus upon are considered infallible (Ibn Taimeeya 2006:126). Al-Albaanee stated, "If there is a statement of a Companion and it does not contradict the texts from the Book of Allah or the *hadeeth* of the Messenger (saw), and the action or statement was known between the Companions without any differing opinions, then we can be comfortable in practicing that Companion's action or statement" (al-Sha'baan 2010:12). Some scholars posit that it is the collective understanding of the Companions that constitutes evidence rather than the statement of a single Companion.

Salafees like to emphasize that their *da'wa* is not simply based upon an empty claim and only true practitioners can be considered *Salafee*. An applicable *fiqh* principle often cited by *Salafees* is 'the reality of something is not in its name but in its substance.' This principle states that regardless of a claim something does not change its given characteristic. Therefore, although an individual may claim to be *Salafee*, that is not sufficient in determining the reality of that individual, or free him from sectarianism. For *Salafees* this means that it is not merely an empty slogan to refer to one's organization, group, or an individual as *Salafee*, but instead it is the understanding and practical application of *Salafee* principles that determine whether one is *Salafee* or not.

The *Salafee* creed and methodology can be traced back to the traditions of early *Sunni* Muslims such as *Ahl al-Hadeeth* (people of *hadeeth*). *Salafees* are known for their strong emphasis of the *hadeeth* sciences and literalism similar to *Ahl al-Hadeeth*. *Imaam* al-Shahrastanee states about the original group, "The reason they are called *Ahl al-Hadeeth* is because of their vigor in obtaining *hadeeth*, transmitting them, and extracting rulings from the texts. They did not use analogies as long as they had *hadeeth* or narrations to base their rulings" (2011: 1/84). *Ahl al-Hadeeth* alludes to those individuals who collected, compiled, and spread *hadeeth* and were more literal in their approach to the texts. They were very literal in their methodology probably due to their meticulous scholarship and rigid criterion used for authenticating texts by scrutinizing narrators, the texts themselves, and laying down principles for the *hadeeth* sciences.⁶ Another attribute of *Ahl al-Hadeeth* is that they were also critical of blind following anyone in rulings although other scholars after that era began to canonize the *mathhabs* and introduce the concept of *taqleed*⁷ contrary to the way of the original *Imaams*. All of these various

⁶ Some of the famous schools of *Ahl Hadeeth* were in Hijaaz, Iraq, Shaam, they were from the followers of Imam Maalik, Shaafi'ee, Sufyaan al-Thawree, Dawood al-Asfahane, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. During the second and third century hijra imams such as Yahya bin Sa'eed al-Qahtaan, Wak'ee bin al-Jaraah, Sufyaan al-Thawree, and Sufyaan bin 'Ayaina, Shu'ba bin al-Hajaaj, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdee, Al-Awzaa'ee, and Laith amongst the many (al-Ashqaar 2005).

⁷ The term is used to denote blind following a particular scholar or group without regard for the truth either as a result of being incapable of understanding an opposing viewpoint or unwilling to due to strict partisanship.

characteristics attributed to *Ahl al-Hadeeth* are also found in the methodology of contemporary *Salafees* and indicates why they place so much emphasis on *hadeeth* sciences. Al-Najmee asserts, “Associating to *Salafee da’wa* means adhering to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (saw) were upon, and to the path of *Ahl al-Hadeeth*. *Ahl al-Hadeeth* refers to those who traverse the path of the *Salafee manhaj*. *Salafism* is the belief in the divine names and attributes of Allah, belief in divine destiny, and in the status of the Companions” (2004:32).⁸

The usage of the term *Salafee* signifies that the practitioner adheres to a certain set of values emphasizing creed with a particular orientation and methodology of how to articulate that creed as a means of reforming both individual and society. The term *Salafee* is an ascription for the practitioner of the creed and methodology of the *Salaf*. Haykel observes, “It is important to understand Salafis [*sic*] as constituting a group that defines its reformist project first and foremost through creedal tenets (i.e., a theology). Also, important, though secondary, for their self-definition are certain legal teachings as well as forms of sociability and politics” (2013:35). *Salafees* view themselves as reformers of the Muslim nation, reviving the orthodox creed using the same methodology of understanding used by the first generation of Muslims, in turn, their view is that it is an obligation to adhere and associate to the *Salafee* doctrine. *Shaikh* al-Albaanee referred to this reformation process as *tarbiya wa tasfiya* (education and purification). His view was that reformation of the Muslim community could only come about through education of the masses in the pristine religious tenets espoused by the *Salaf* and the practice and reformation of the self (2007). This reformation would then allow the Muslim community to confront contemporary problems and issues. This concept of reformation is derived in part from the statement of *Imaam* Maalik who said, “The latter generations of this nation will not be corrected except by that which rectified the first generation” (Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr 1999:3/221). This statement is a direct reference to the return in understanding and practice of the *Salaf*. Statements like

⁸ Around the 3rd century *hijra*, some sects began to appear, collectively known as *Ahl al-Kalaam*, which began to dispute the literalism espoused by *Ahl al-Hadeeth*. Also, they differed over some of the creedal tenets and how they were interpreted. Al-Najmee was probably referring to those specific tenets of faith due to immense dissension between *Ahl al-Hadeeth* and *Ahl al-Kalaam*.

these lend credence to the *Salafee* perception that solutions of contemporary socio-political problems of the Muslim community will come about only by revisiting the methodology of the *Salaf*.

Salafees claim to adhere to a long and continuous tradition, which shuns both cultural interpretations of Islam, and any practices or beliefs deemed unorthodox, or seen as encouraging partisanship.⁹ According to the claims of scholars like al-Najmee:

Salafism is one. Whoever claims that there is an old *Salafism* and a new *Salafism*, has lied. If we ponder on the creed of the *Salaf* from the time of the Companions until now we will find one creed. They did not disagree regarding it. When they did disagree, it was not in belief or fundamentals, but rather in subsidiary rulings. When they did differ in subsidiary issues they did not consider one another blameworthy... (2004:244).

Several points require highlighting in light of the *Shaikh's* statement. First, the *Salafee* view that there is only one legitimate *da'wa* and there is no cause for distinction between the *manhaj* of the *Salaf* and contemporary *Salafees* methodology. Second, that this tradition, according to *Salafees*, is continuous and its proponents have existed throughout Islamic history from the time of the Prophet (saw). There is evidence from *hadeeth* to suggest that there is a Muslim group that will maintain orthodoxy from amongst the greater community that will be present until the last days before judgment, and this will be scrutinized in the section regarding *Salafee* creed.

Some contemporary critics of *Salafism* claim that as a methodology it is impractical to attempt to apply puritanical principles to contemporary issues. El-Fadl asserts:

This approach besides being ahistorical, proved to be hopelessly simplistic and naive (as) – it was impossible to return to Qur'an and *Sunnah* [sic] in a

⁹ This point is hotly contested as some academics and indeed contemporary scholars deny *Salafism* as a concept and term were used outside of twentieth century (see section on *Problems with Contemporary Classifications*).

vacuum (because) a return to the Qur'an necessarily meant a return to classical sources that commented on the context and meaning of the verses and that explained the collection and documentation of the Qur'anic text (2001:174).

El Fadl's observation is valid in as far as recognizing the difficulties of contextualizing the sacred texts and the tensions that arise in using classical interpretations to apply to modern-day settings in a rapidly changing world. Also, El-Fadl's view illustrates, that for some, the issue is not the importance of the *Salaf*, but rather the applicability of their methodology in a modern-day context. For example, the role of women in society during the time of the Prophet (saw) and their relegation to predominately domestic roles in opposed to contemporary time where women are often in leadership positions, and where the norm is for a woman to function without a guardian. So how do *Salafees* reconcile classical interpretations with the varying complexities and differing realities faced in a contemporary world? The answer to that question will be deferred till the third chapter when discussing the critics of the *Salafee* methodology.

Principles of *Salafism*

So, what criterion is there for determining whether or not someone is *Salafee* after accounting for errors an individual may have? To answer this question precisely requires analyzing the criterion put forth by *Salafee* scholars.

Salafism is a complex set of principles based upon a particular creed and methodology for understanding the sacred texts. According to *Shaikh* 'Ubaid al-Jaabiree some key principles of the *Salafee da'wa* are: ascribing to *Salafism*, strict adherence to the truth as articulated by the apparent meaning of sacred texts, loving and hating in accordance with principles of the religion, contesting those who differ with the *Salafee* understanding, and strict adherence in practice to the Qur'an and *Sunna* (2015).

This first principle, as mentioned by *Shaikh* al-Jaabiree, is ascribing to the *Salafee manhaj*. As previously mentioned, this ascription is deemed necessary by most *Salafee* scholars even if they do not deem it necessary to declare it openly. For example, *Salafee* scholars agree that following the *Salaf* in practice and creed and referencing them are obligations. However, the obligation of openly proclaiming one is *Salafee* is an area of contention between *Salafee* scholars.¹⁰ The position of scholars like al-Albaanee and al-Jaabiree seems clear: they both exhort to openly proclaiming one's *Salafism* as an obligatory ascription to distinguish from the various Islamic sects that have arisen throughout time and to exemplify the creed and methodology of the *Salaf* (al-Jaabiree 2015). *Shaikh* al-Albaanee stated, "This ascription (to the *Salaf*) is not to an individual nor group of individuals in the same way we find other contemporary groups...rather it is an attribution to infallibility. That is because it is not possible for the pious *Salaf* to be united upon misguidance. However, this is not the case for those after them" (2011: 2/212). *Shaikh* al-Albaanee's comment underscores *Salafees'* vehement disassociation from partisanship to other than the way of the *Salaf*, as posited previously, and that the *Salafee* paradigm is that the methodology of the *Salaf* in understanding Islam is perfect; however, on an individual level a person may err by deviating from those principles. Other guidelines that follow under the ascription to *Salafism* and denote one's authenticity as a *Salafee* are:

1. that the basis for evidence for a *Salafee* comes from Qur'an, *Sunna*, and consensus
2. in general, those who differ with those principles are considered deviant
3. that the most legitimate consensus is that of the first three generations of Muslims
4. the *jamaa'a* is based upon the Companions' paradigm
5. all issues mentioned as principle in sacred texts and by consensus is *usool* (*Salafee* foundation)

¹⁰ However, as some scholars suggest, if there is harm in openly declaring one is *Salafee* then it becomes necessary to refrain from ascribing to it openly.

6. differing from *usool* is innovation
7. not everyone who falls into religious heresy is a heretic, but they must be examined and meet the criterion for heresy (al-Najjaar 2011).¹¹

The second principle states that the apparent meaning of the sacred texts takes precedence over opinion or *ijtihad*. This is an integral part of the *Salafee manhaj* because it illustrates the *Salafees'* more literal approach to understanding the Qur'an and *Sunna* to deduce rulings. In light of this principle, al-'Uthaimeen mentions speech as being divided into two main categories: literal and figurative. Literal speech further separates into three categories: linguistic, *sharee'a* based, and customary usage. He then posits that the base methodology of Qur'anic exegesis is literal unless there is evidence to support that it is figurative. He states, "It is not permissible to interpret linguistic expressions as figurative unless there is sound evidence which prevents its literal meaning" (al-'Uthaimeen 2006 p.78). The importance of this principle cannot be overstated because stemming from it is the *Salafee* interpretation of the sacred texts. Also, this literalism has a profound impact on the tenets of creed. For example, *Salafees* interpret the verse "The Most-Merciful rose above His throne" (Qur'an 1996 5:20), literally as meaning Allah rose over His throne in a manner that suits His majesty without describing or inferring how, and at the same time rejecting anthropomorphism. This was based upon a fundamental principle of the *Salaf* and their methodology. "We know that the *mathhab* of the *Salaf* from the Companions-may Allah be pleased with them-and the *Taabi'een* and those who followed them, was to understand the evidence regarding (divine) attributes literally without distorting the meaning or making analogy" (al-Shawkaanee 2013: 27).

The third principle is challenging other groups and sects, which differ with the *Salafee manhaj*. It should not be understood that *Salafees'* primary role should be

¹¹ Heresy is a term used to describe religious innovation or deviancy from the *Salafee* creed or *manhaj*. This does not necessitate one being excommunicated from Islam unless the action, belief, or statement necessitates expulsion from the religion according to the sacred texts or consensus of the scholars. For details regarding the criterion for heresy, *bid'a* and *takfeer* refer to *The Khawaarij and the Creed of Takfeer* (Green 2009).

to pursue debates and arguments regarding theological matters; however, as a part of the *manhaj* it is necessary to refute opposing ideologies if one is capable and possesses the appropriate scholarly credentials. Scholars like al-Fawzaan state, “It is impermissible for beginning students and laypersons to busy with declaring people to be innovators or sinners, because it is a serious matter and they do not possess knowledge and competency in these issues” (al-Fawzaan 2011:189). Although scholars like *Imaam Ahmad* described refuting *Ahl al-Bid’a* as a religious duty, and in fact a type of *jihaad*, it was never intended as the responsibility of all Muslims, especially if they did not have the prerequisite knowledge to do so effectively. The *Salaf* “prohibited debating and argumentation if the one debating was weak regarding knowledge and evidence, and ambiguous in responses, and it was feared that the deviant one would misguide him” (Ibn Taimeeya 1997:3/227).

Also, stemming from this principle is *Salafees*’ repugnance for association to individual figureheads, which emanates from statements of classical scholars like *Imaam Maalik* who said, “Everyone’s statements can be accepted or rejected except the inhabitant of that grave” (Ibn ‘Abdul Barr 2011:2/118).¹² The context of this narration is that *Imaam Maalik* was pointing to the grave of the Prophet (saw). This narration illustrates the concept that no scholar is beyond reproach and it emphasizes the command to follow the Prophet (saw), and the fundamental of returning all affairs back to the *Sunna*. Ibn ‘Abbaas said, as narrated in Ahmad, “I believe they will soon be destroyed. I say the Prophet (saw) said (such and such), and they say Abu Bakr and ‘Umar prohibited (such and such)” (1972: 4/112).

Salafees as a group tend to be very decentralized and do not ascribe themselves to a particular leader or party, but instead they gain their prestige from their acknowledgement and strict adherence to following the path of the *Salaf*. This was also the case of the Companions, who are considered the leaders of *Ahl al-Sunna*,

¹² Echoing the statement used by *Imam Maalik*, *Shaikh al-Albaanee* said, “And do not say so and so said, because the truth is not understood by men, rather men are known by their adherence to the truth” (al-Sha’baan 2010:57). This implicit reference to the statement of *Imam Maalik* illustrates two key points of *Salafism*: the texts of the Qur’an and *Sunna* take precedence over opinions and reasoning, and that scholars and groups are to be judged by those sacred texts and not vice versa.

Ibn ‘Abbaas said, “Muaawiyya said to me- may Allah have mercy upon him- Do you follow the religion of ‘Alee? I said no. Nor do I follow the religion of ‘Uthmaan. Instead I follow the religion of the Messenger of Allah (saw) (al-Laalakaa’ee 2015:2/18). Although *Salafees* do not have a specific leader they do seemingly respect religious scholarship and authority. *Salafism* contains a decentralized hierarchy: the scholar, student of knowledge, and finally the layperson, which in turn forms the basic structure for how knowledge is disseminated.

The fourth principle is the belief of *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a* (loyalty and disavowal for Allah). In the context of this study it refers to having love and brotherhood for believers, especially other *Salafees*, and disavowal from disbelievers and sects. Muslims who are believed to have deviated from the *Salafee* creed and *manhaj* are treated in accordance with the extent of their deviation. For example, a takfeeree, who although Muslim, may be boycotted with the objective of preserving orthodoxy and defending against the harm posed by allowing extremism to go unchecked. “There does not exist a clearer ruling containing more Qur’anic evidence of loving and disavowal after the obligation of *tawheed* and prohibition of what contradicts it: polytheism” (al-‘Ateeq 2010:78).

Salafees are often portrayed as intolerant towards other sects, groups, and faiths. This is in part due to the concept of *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a*, which can be traced back to literalist interpretations of the Qur’an and *Sunna*. In addition, the exegesis of the *Salaf* as well as contemporary *Salafee* scholars tends to be quite literal which is why *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a* is often seen as divisive and uncompromising. In the Qur’anic chapter *al-Kaafiroon* Allah says:

Say: O disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you worship what I worship. I shall never worship what you worship, and nor will you ever worship what I worship. To you be your religion, and to me mine (1996 1:109).

Imaam Sa'dee¹³ explicates that this was an exhortation to proclaim openly and clearly disavowing everything worshipped besides Allah (2015). The Prophet (saw) explained as reported in Ahmad, "It is disavowal of polytheism" (1972:3/271). *Imaam* al-Qurtobee reported that Ibn 'Abbaas said, "There is nothing in the Qur'an that is more harmful upon the devil than this verse because it is *tawheed* and disavowal of *shirk* (polytheism)" (2012: 22/533). This narration, which was reported in various collections, illustrates that *tawheed*, *shirk*, and *al-bara'a* were in fact *sharee'a* concepts and terms that existed during the advent of Islam and were in use long before it became common *Salafee* discourse.¹⁴ Another verse often cited when affirming the concept of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* is verse 5:51 in the Qur'an that states:

O believers, take not Jews and Christians as *awliyaa* (friends, protectors, supporters); they are friends to one another. Whosoever of you takes them as friends is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not the people of the evildoers (1996).

Here *Shaikh* Sa'dee mentions that accepting non-Muslims and taking them as supporters has different levels, and that those who do exhibit love for them do so at the expense of their faith (2015). This verse sums up the concept of *al-bara'a* and what it means for *Salafees*; however many *takfeeree* groups also cite these same verses but misconstrue the meanings and use them as a pretext for violence (Meijer 2013).

Al-wala'a wa al-bara'a forms an integral part of the *Salafee* creed. This concept is considered as a part of *tawheed*: embracing monotheism and its adherents and disavowing polytheism and its practitioners. In this belief the Muslims associate with other believers and express loyalty based upon an individual's adherence to Islamic commandments and faith. In contrast, disavowal is shown towards those who are

¹³ Abdul Rahman Sa'dee, died 1376 *hijra*, one of the renowned *Salafee* Scholars and teachers of Muhammad bin al-'Uthaimen.

¹⁴ Some contemporary researchers agree that the terms were in existence since the advent of Islam; however, they suggest that the concept of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* has been broadened under contemporary *Salafees* to include Muslims who do not hold the *Salafee* creed and *manhaj*.

disobedient to Qur'anic principles or disbelievers. Thus, a person of heresy is disavowed and ostracized, but not in the same way as a disbeliever. For example, a Muslim that is sinful or oppressive towards others still has the general rights of a Muslim due to the bond of faith. In contrast, a non-Muslim is not afforded those same rights due primarily to the absence of faith. Therefore, although both the sinful believer and non-Muslim have transgressions, one through inadequate faith, and the other due to a complete absence thereof, they both warrant a type of disavowal (al-Aa'simee 2012).

Salafism is a multifarious set of beliefs, which at times appear to controvert one another according to the outsider; however additional analysis to discern those apparent contradictions is required. For example, it must be discerned why some *Salafee* scholars justify the dichotomy of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a*, and cooperation with non-Muslim militaries, or intelligence agencies against other Muslims. The answer to this lies in what scholars determine is for the general benefit of the Muslims (*maslaha 'aam*) or the principle of choosing the lesser of two evils.

One such example is the *fatwa* allowing for American troops to be stationed in Saudi Arabia to help defend it from invasion by Iraq during the first Gulf War. This issue caused immense controversy at the time resulting in many divisions amongst scholars internationally.

The justification for the *fatwa* was that the threat posed by *Baathists* was greater than allowing non-Muslim troops into the Holy lands to help defend Saudi Arabia. Also, it was cited as a justification that the troops should not be permanent in Saudi Arabia and that they did not pose a threat to the holy sanctuaries as opposed to Iraqi forces that were invading and would have become an occupying force.

Another example, which has evoked immense controversy in contemporary times and has relevance for this study, is the issue of voting and participation in elections. Central to *Salafee* belief is that it is prohibited even in a Muslim society and more so

in a non-Muslim state. This is because participation in a non-Muslim political system is seen as clearly violating Allah's sovereignty as the sole ruler and legislator of divine law, thus a violation of Islamic monotheism. However, some major *Salafee* scholars such as al-'Abbaad, and al-Albaanee have argued that it is permissible under certain circumstances while invoking the principle of choosing the lesser of two evils. Al-Albaanee states, "If a Muslim is placed between two evils he chooses the lesser of the two evils. There is no doubt that having a Muslim as the president (mayor) of local government is less harmful –and I don't say better- than having a mayor that is a disbeliever or an atheist" (madeenah.com 2016). After being asked about voting in elections in America *Shaikh* Waseeullah 'Abbaas, a renowned *Salafee hadeeth* scholar responded, "That which appears correct to me, Insha'Allah, is that if some good is anticipated as a result of voting, then we vote. We vote for the candidate as long as he is presently benefiting the Muslims or promises to benefit the Muslims in the future, even if he is not a Muslim (madeenah.com 2016). Al-'Abbaad states:

There is no harm in voting for candidates who will be of more benefit to the Muslims than the others. In this instance, voting for them is an example of doing the lesser of two evils to avoid the greater evil. All of the candidates are disbelievers, and therefore, harmful. However, the candidate who is less harmful to the Muslims is better than the candidate whose harm is far greater (madeenah.com 2016)

These examples illustrate cases in which major *Salafee* scholars differed with, and detailed, their position regarding contemporary issues breaking from the mainstream *Salafee* position without being accused of heresy.

In sum, the core principles espoused by *Salafee* scholars are ascribing to the *Salafee* concept of monotheism and creed, practice of *Salafee* core tenets, adopting the more literal methodology of textual analysis, exercising adoration for fellow believers, and opposition to those who differ with these fundamental tenets. In order to comprehend *Salafism* their core beliefs must be properly analyzed

because *Salafees* adhere to a rigid doctrine that forms the basis of their propagation and separates them from many of their antagonists.

Creed

Shaikh Muhammad Baazmool explains, “*Salafism* is based upon three fundamental beliefs. The first belief is sincerity in worshipping Allah the Most Exalted. The second is adhering to the main body of Muslims. The third belief is warning against religious heresy and heretics” (2015). These pillars mentioned by *Shaikh* Baazmool are in fact similar to what was previously mentioned by *Shaikh* al-Jaabiree. The beliefs and principles mentioned overlap one another and are comprised of creed and principles of *manhaj*.

The central tenet of the *Salafee* creed is sincerity in worship, which centers on the concept of *tawheed* (monotheism). This refers to an ever-living God as the lord and creator of all things, who possesses unique attributes and divine characteristics, and who is the only God who should be worshiped. This also includes the concept of faith as propounded by the *Salaf* and the concept of excommunication from the religion (Green 2009). These are the most relevant tenets of creed for the purpose of this research; however the *Salafee* creed includes “the foundation of the religion which is derived from issues that are obligatory to believe by professing them or by professing and practice: like issues of *tawheed*, divine attributes of Allah, divine destiny, prophethood, and resurrection, or evidences for those issues” (Ibn Taimeeya 2006:112). The *Salafee* belief comprises of both the pillars of Islam and pillars of faith, which are common to all Muslims as they are deduced from the Qur’an and *Sunna*. Practical application is a part of faith according to the *Salafee* creed and the theorem is, as *Tahiree* states, “if a person’s creed is sound then his deeds will be sound. However, if a person’s creed is specious then his deeds will be incorrect: his manners will be corrupt as well as his methodology” (2016). For *Salafees* the relationship between creed, methodology, and practice of Islamic tenets is intrinsically related, so by rectifying creed it necessitates correction of the

other aspects of the religion. This belief wholly centered on creed also has precedence from the *Salaf*. “For this reason, *Imaam* Abu Haneefa... referred to that branch of knowledge as *fiqh al-akbar* (major *fiqh*). He named the science of creed *fiqh al-akbar* and he was pointing to the fact that *fiqh al-asghar* (minor *fiqh*) had no benefit without *fiqh al-akbar*” (Tahiree 2016). The logic is as such: sound creed is what allows for a person to embrace the Islamic faith, and a corrupted creed is one of the main reasons for nullifying one’s faith (Green 2009).

The second belief referred to by Baazmool is the encouragement for the Muslim community to be one community avoiding schisms. The dictates of Islam encourage community, harmony and cooperation. For *Salafees*, adhering to a common creed and *manhaj* can only manifest these principles of unity. Allah says, “And hold all of you to the rope of Allah and do not divide” (Qur’an 1996 3:103). In a *hadeeth* narrated in Ahmad, the Prophet (saw) said, “The Jews separated into seventy-one sects, and the Christians into seventy-two sects, and my nation into seventy-three sects all of them in the fire except one.” He was asked, “Who are they Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Those who are upon my way and the way of my Companions” (1972:4/121). The *Salafee* understanding of the above texts is that by adhering to the correct creed and *manhaj* one procures salvation and maintains communal unity avoiding schism; however, true unity can only be obtained by subscribing to a unified creed.

The third tenet centers on the importance of disavowing religious heresy. *Salafees* argue that by shunning unorthodox religious practices they are defending religious orthodoxy and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf*.¹⁵ The Prophet (saw) said, “Whoever innovates in this matter of ours will have it rejected” (Muslim 1999 3/160). For *Salafees*, *hadeeth* narrations like the aforementioned impede all religious discussion and debate over *bid’a*. Furthermore, *Salafees* believe they are

¹⁵ Unorthodox practices include religious beliefs that violate faith such as grave worship, idolizing saints, or sacrificing animals to other than Allah. In addition, religious practices that do not invalidate faith, but rather distort belief or practice are also prohibited and considered unorthodox. For example, the *bid’a* of the *Khawarij* who made *takfeer* of major sinners and introduced the concept of rebellion in Islam, which is relevant to this study.

connected to and bound by the creed and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf*, also that they are entrusted with preserving them. Bin Baz states regarding *bid'a*:

Bid'a in the *sharee'a* is every type of worship invented that does not have an origin in the Qur'an, nor the *Sunna*, nor in the actions of the rightly guided caliphate. Due to the statement of the Messenger (saw), "Whoever innovates in this affair of ours will have it rejected." Agreed upon in its authenticity. And his (saw) statement, "Whoever does an action not in accordance with our affairs will have it rejected." Narrated by Muslim in his authentic book. And his (saw) statement in the *hadeeth* of Irbaadh bin Saariya, "It is upon you my *Sunna* and the *Sunna* of the rightly guided caliphate after me. Adhere to it and cling to it with your molar teeth and beware newly invented matters for every newly invented matter is an innovation and every innovation leads astray." *Imaam* Ahmad and Abu Dawood and al-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maaja with an authentic chain of narrators (Binbaz.org 2017).¹⁶

Bin Baz's statement shows the meticulousness that *Salafee* scholars seek to authenticate their premises by compiling *hadeeth* and Qur'anic verses to substantiate their positions, and rigid assessment of the *hadeeth* texts. However, it must be noted that this does not suggest that they simply compile evidences to validate their premises, but instead they affirm their understanding with roots in classical scholarship.

A vital part of *Salafism's* integrity rests upon their claim of possessing a consistent and unified creed deduced from divine texts. "Regarding creed and methodology of the Companions it was one and has continued to be one until contemporary times" (Al-Najmee 2004:24). A common principle which is often cited by *Salafee* scholars when discussing worship and creed is 'the original principle is that all worship is forbidden unless sanctioned by the Qur'an and *Sunna* and the origin of all transactions is that they are permissible unless there is evidence to suggest they are forbidden' (al-Mashaiqih 2015). *Shaikh* al-Albaanee posits in this regard, "The origin of worship is that it is not considered as worship except from the Messenger

¹⁶ This is the *Salafee* perspective; however, some classical scholars felt the concept of *bid'a* was more nuanced, even to the extent of classifying it according to the five *fiqh* rulings: obligatory, recommended, permissible, disliked, and impermissible. *Salafees* generally argue that those references to *bid'a* are linguistic references, meaning a matter of semantics and that all religious innovation is unacceptable (Green 2009).

of Allah (saw), this is agreed upon between the scholars” (al-Sha’baan 2010:73). He also mentioned, “The origin of transactions is that they are permissible unless there is an explicit text (prohibiting that action)” (al-Sha’baan 2010:75). These principles form the fundamental way *Salafees* view worship and what constitutes heresy and what is considered legitimate worship. These principles also regulate creed and methodology.

There are several verses *Salafees* cite to substantiate their *da’wa* to *tawheed* and emphasis on creedal issues. For example, Allah mentions in the Qur’an, “I have not created mankind and the *jinn* except that they should worship Me” (51:712). *Salafees* contend that this verse elucidates that the purpose of creation is to actualize *tawheed*, which is why they center their *da’wa* on monotheism and worship. *Imam* al-Tabaree cites a narration of Ibn Abbas, a Companion, who states about this verse, “Mankind and *jinn* were created to worship (Allah alone) with complete subservience to His commands” (2012 9:7640). For *Salafees*, keeping within the classical tradition and understanding as espoused by the Companions is critical in their reformist movement and lends legitimacy to their *da’wa*. *Salafees’* concept of *tawheed* (monotheism) is that it can be divided into three distinct categories: lordship, sincerity in worship, and the divinity of Allah’s names and attributes. Although the *Salaf*, according to *Salafees*, did not explicitly know these categories the evidences for their usage and the concepts are derived directly from the Qur’an and *Sunna*. For *Salafees*, to violate one of these three categories is to violate monotheism and can lead to polytheism. Depending upon the degree of the infraction determines whether one’s faith is nullified or not. The first category of *tawheed*, *al-ruboobeeya* or lordship, refers to the actions and essence of the Creator Himself. According to this category Allah is the sustainer, creator, provider, and lord of everything. The second category is *al-ulooheeya* or *tawheed* of worship. This category is a reference to the various acts of worship by created beings. For example, an action is considered a valid act of worship if it is sincerely directed to Allah and done in accordance with the authentic *Sunna*. The third category of *tawheed* is *al-asmaa wa al-sifaat* referring to the divine names and attributes unique

to Allah. The implication of this aspect of *tawheed* is that when one supplicates they should include the unique and divine names of Allah. In addition, this category of *tawheed* mandates that Allah is only to be described by Qur'anic texts or authentic *Sunna* of the Prophet (saw), which affirm His divine names and attributes.

There are many core beliefs that are critical to understanding *Salafism* with many codified in classic works of the *Salaf*. For example, the pillars of faith, the concept of faith, issues pertaining to the belief in the Qur'an as divine revelation, paradise and hell, the divine attributes of Allah, and the concept of sin. Also, central to the *Salafee* creed is the concept of *shirk* or polytheism. Some of the later books of creed detailed the *Salafee* concept of polytheism, which is to direct any act of worship to other than Allah or associate partners with Him. For example, “supplicating to saints, seeking assistance to remove a harm that only Allah is capable of removing, and making lawful that which Allah has made prohibited by believing it to be permissible” are all actions and beliefs that entail major *shirk* (Bin Baz 2001:1/43).¹⁷ In addition, the classical creedal texts from the four *mathhabs* all discussed the obligation to obey the tyrannical rulers and the concept of *takfeer* as a rebuttal of the *Khawaarij* sect.¹⁸ The reason the *Salaf* cited the atrocities of the *Khawaarij* and documented their core principles in creedal texts was because they deviated from the orthodox concept of faith: they excommunicated tyrant rulers (according to the *Khawaarij* tyranny nullifies faith), and thus they felt compelled to revolt against them because they considered them apostates. This is vital in understanding the restrictive nature of the *Salafee manhaj* and why they view ideologues and groups that depart from the established method of the *Salaf* as being deviant or in error. Some of the contemporary ideologues often associated with *Salafism* are rejected for their political activism and position regarding rebellion

¹⁷ To illustrate, if a Muslim knows the prohibition of alcohol but rejects it, making it lawful to indulge in, then this would constitute a belief of polytheism, because of his rejection of a clear prohibition from the Qur'an and believing it to be lawful. According to many scholars, his belief constitutes a nullification of Divine legislation.

¹⁸ See Imaam Abu Haneefa's *Fiqh al-Akbar*, Imaam al-Muzanee's *Sharh al-Sunna* (*shaafi'ee scholar* died 264 Hijra), Imam Ahmad's *Usool al-Sunna*, Imaam al-Tahaawee's '*Aqueeda al-Tahaaweeya* (*Hanafee scholar*, died 321 Hijra). Also, many of the *hadeeth* collections had sections devoted to *hadeeth* refuting the *Khawaarij* and *Murji'a* sects.

against an unjust Muslim leader, or their concept of what constitutes a legitimate *jihad*.¹⁹ *Salafee*'s scrutiny of individuals who appear to diverge with the accepted *Salafee* position may seem trivial to outside observers. However, through criticism and observing stringent criterion *Salafees* maintain a fairly consistent program of reform, which is useful for students of *Salafism* to determine what traits are acceptable according to the *manhaj*. *Salafee* scholars have written extensively about the relationship of politicians and *jihadists* to thinkers such as Qutb and Mawdoodi. *Salafees* contend that thinkers like Mawdoodi were revivers of the creed of *takfir* and rebellion in contemporary times and that the evidence suggests that his thought has had a huge impact on many contemporary scholars that are incorrectly associated with *Salafism* by academics. While discussing one of the contemporary ideologues, often classified as *Salafee* by external observers, Suhaimee observes, the *manhaj* of Muhammad Suroor "contains some agreement with the *Sunna* and something from *bid'a*" (2005:99). This is a consistent claim among *Salafee* scholars regarding many of the '*Sahwa*' scholars²⁰ often referred to as politicians by outside academics. Suhaimee postulates that some of the reasons for Suroor's expulsion from the *Salafee manhaj*, not Islam, is due to his harsh criticisms against *Salafee* scholars, his debasement of contemporary Muslim rulers, and that he considers violent *jihad* as a mechanism to remove tyrant Muslim leaders. For example, Suroor claims there are different levels of servitude and ways that contemporary leaders worship the West. He believes Arab Muslim leaders are secular hypocrites, especially Saudi royals, and that these rulers believe their harms and benefits are in the hands of Western leaders, instead of Allah. Suroor describes *Salafee* scholars by stating, "As for today, freeing a slave is conditional... observe those who speak about *tawheed* and they are slaves of slaves of slaves of slaves of the slave and their master is a Christian" (Suhaimee 2005:183).

¹⁹ It is important to note that *Salafees* distinguish between laypersons and scholars. Therefore, a scholar that propagates a consistent methodological difference from *Salafees* is seen as *hizbee*, whereas laypersons are not evaluated in the same manner.

²⁰ Although the *Sahwah* movement initially called for political reform, many of its leaders began to openly challenge the state's legitimacy (Meijer 2015).

Qutb's works are quoted from and extolled by many contemporary politicians as well as *takfeeris*. For example, Suroor expounds, "I do not know of a book during this time which deals with the problems like Syed's...he had the most appropriate fixes for contemporary issues, far from extremism and his evidences were from the Book, the *Sunna*, and the statements of the *imaams*" (Suhaimi 2005:184). The praise of Qutb and his writings, according to *Salafees*, is a grave misstep due to his consistent methodological deviation from core *Salafee* concepts. In addition, Suroor's derogatory commentary of Muslim leaders and *Salafee* scholars puts him at odds with the *Salafee manhaj* making it inaccurate to associate him with that methodology. Qutb was preceded by Mawdoodi as a revolutionary thinker, and many academics allege he was influenced by his writings. Nevertheless, both writers were clearly at odds with *Salafism* and influenced by the revolutionary thought of their time, which is reflected in their methodology and creed. Mawdoodi states, "The truth is that Islam is a revolutionary ideology which seeks to alter the social order of the entire world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. "Muslims" is the title of that "International Revolutionary Party" organized by Islam to carry out its revolutionary program" (1995:4). The rhetoric and terminology used by Mawdoodi illustrate a very politically centered analysis of Islam with Muslims being the vanguard of revolution. This is an essential pillar of those who are often referred to as politicians and Islamists: they see Islam as a political movement and a means to secure state power. On the other hand, *Salafees* focus on individual reform with a more bottom up approach to societal transformation.

Mawdoodi and those influenced by his thought focus on statehood and authority. Both politicians and *jihadee* groups share these aims; however, they differ when it comes to the question of violence. Whether violence is central to change or a political solution is required is key to understanding the methodological differences between politicians and *takfeere-jihadee* groups. To illustrate how Mawdoodi's thought is echoed by many of the contemporary groups Mawdoodi states:

The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of this ideology and programme, regardless of which nation assumes the role of

standard-bearer of Islam, regardless of the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic state. Islam requires the earth-not just a portion, but the entire planet...” (1995:5).

In the proceeding chapter it will become clearer the relationship between Mawdoodi and the effects of his thought upon some of the contemporary groups like ISIS. Mawdoodi states, “Fighting in the way of Allah refers to the struggle for the establishment of Allah’s just order in the world. The fighter in the way of Allah aims to abide by the law of Allah himself, and to enforce it among other human beings” (1995:6). He also states, “The illustrious Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) was the greatest Revolutionary Leader of all” (1995:9). From the *Salafee* perspective, referencing the Prophet (saw) in this context: a revolutionary, is unorthodox because it implies his mission was a quest for power, leadership and overthrowing existing power structures rather than the reform of polytheistic beliefs and propagating *tawheed*. This is not to suggest that Mawdoodi did not consider *tawheed* central to *da’wa*; however, his politicization of this call is considered an anomaly to *Salafees*. For Mawdoodi, Islam is “a comprehensive system which seeks to annihilate all evil and tyrannical systems in the world, and enforce its own program of reform, which it deems best for the well-being of mankind” (1995:10). Mawdoodi views Islam as a revolutionary movement with Muslims relegated as the vanguard of that revolutionary faction. He states, “Hence this party is left with no other option but to seize the authority of the state, for an evil system takes root and flourishes under the patronage of an evil government, and a pious cultural order can never be established until the authority of government is wrested from the wicked and transferred to the hands of the reformers” (1995:12). Contemporary *jihaadist* thought is filled with rhetoric espousing the need to remove tyrannical Muslim governments, rectification of the world order through violence, and in the case of ISIS, the need to conquer lands and acquire territory by subjugating disbelievers. These concepts will be explored further in chapter two.

Names of *Ahl al-Sunna*

Historically, the *Sunni* Muslim community has used a variety of different names to refer to itself. Some of the most renowned names mentioned in classical texts are *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa'a* (the people of *Sunna* and community), *Ahl al-Hadeeth*, the *Salaf al-Saalih* (pious predecessors), *Ahl al-Athaar* (people of narrations)²¹, and *Firqatu al-Naajiya* (the saved sect). All of the above terms are derived from *hadeeth* literature or classical texts written by scholars during the first three centuries of Islamic history (al-Rehailee 2002).

During the period of the first three caliphates in Islam Muslims referred to themselves only as Muslims in accordance with the dictates of the Qur'an. However, during the time of the third generation of Muslims there began to appear sectarianism with groups like the *Khawaarij* and *Shia* splitting from the community and manifesting creedal differences. In response to the spread of unorthodox practices and concepts, the *Sunni* community began to refer to themselves as *Sunni* and terms like the *Sunna* became widespread. 'Abdullah ibn Abbaas, a Companion, stated, "The faces of *Ahl al-Sunna* will be whitened on the Day of Judgment, and the faces of *Ahl al-Bid'a* and sectarianism will be darkened" (al-Siyootee 2000:2/63). Maalik bin Maghool, a *Taabi'ee*, stated, "If a man refers to himself by other than Islam and the *Sunna* then consider him to be from another faith" (al-Laalakaa'ee 2015:1/72). While no direct reference to the term *Salaf* as a descriptor for *Ahl al-Sunna* is used in the Qur'an, *Salafees* often use a variety of verses referring to the merits of the Companions to substantiate its usage. One such verse often cited from the Qur'an, "Whoever differs with the Messenger after clear guidance has been given to him and follows other than the believers' path, then We shall give him what he has followed and place him in Hell, which is an evil destination" (1996 4:115). *Salafee* scholars explain that the path of the believers

²¹ Imam al-Safaareene (died 1188 Hijra) explained *Ahl al-Athaar* as those who take their creed from what was related by Allah the All-Mighty in His book, or from the Sunna of His Prophet (saw), or what was authenticated upon the *Salaf al-Saalih*...without the mistakes of *Ahl al-Ra'yy*" (al-Safaareene 2016:27).

mentioned in the verse is a reference to the practice and understanding of the Companions, which they consider to be a direct allusion to the *Salafee* methodology. Another verse often cited reads: “And the first forerunners (in faith) among the emigrants and the People of Medina, and those that followed them in good conduct. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, that is the great attainment” (Qur’an 1996 9:100). *Imaam* al-Baghawee, (died 515 *hijra*), states that the verse was explained by many of the *Taabi’een* like Sa’eed bin Musayib, Ibn Sireen, and Qataada as referring to the Companions (1987). The Companions are considered to be the origin of *Ahl al-Sunna* and the *Salaf*. *Salafees* consider their usage of the term *Salafee* to be in accordance with how the *Sunni* community has used ascriptions to denote the orthodox creed and distinguish its adherents from other sects that have arisen throughout Islamic history.

Reference to the *Salaf* in Hadeeth

Numerous *hadeeth* describe the high status and rank of the first generations of Muslims and this gives the ascription to the *Salaf* immense importance and legitimacy. In one such narration collected in al-Bukharee the Prophet (saw) said, “The best of the people is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them...” (2009:13/74). Also, a narration collected by Ahmad, “Whoever lives after me shall see many differences. Therefore, adhere to my *Sunna* and the *Sunna* of the rightly guided caliphs...” (1972:4/115). An additional narration collected in Muslim, often cited in *Salafee* literature to authenticate their methodology, emphasizes the role of the *Salaf*, and supports the concept that there would remain a legitimate group well after the demise of the earliest community. The *hadeeth* reads as such, “There will not cease to be a group from my nation which continues to be upon the truth, no one will harm them even if they differ from them until the Day of Judgment” (1999:7/184). *Imaam* ibn Hajar states in his exegesis of this *hadeeth* that *Imaam* al-Bukhari and *Imaam* Ahmad bin Hanbal say

that this is a direct reference to *Ahl al-Hadeeth*. *Imaam* ‘Alee bin Madeenee said, “They are *Ahl al-Hadeeth* and those who adhere to the path of the Messenger and defend knowledge. It is because of them that the *Mu’tazilla*,²² *Raafida*,²³ *Jahmeeya*,²⁴ *Ahl al-Irja’*,²⁵ and *al-Ra’yy*²⁶ do not possess anything from the *Sunan*” (cited in al-Waadi’ee 2011:34).

Methodology

Methodology, commonly referred to as *manhaj*, is also central to the *Salafee* creed or *da’wa*. Methodology denotes how the creed is articulated and propagated to non-*Salafee* Muslims.²⁷ Methodology also addresses the way or approach to understanding the central Islamic texts: Qur’an and *hadeeth*. *Shaikh* Ahmad Al-Najmee states, “*Manhaj* is the means in which a student of knowledge calls to Allah” (2004:28). *Manhaj* also includes whether scriptural texts are analyzed literally or more figuratively regarding interpretation.²⁸ In the Qur’an it states, “We have made for everyone of you a law and *manhaaj*” (1996 5:48). Ibn ‘Abbaas commented on the verse saying, “path and *Sunna*” (al-Tabaree 2012: 4/519). Therefore, *manhaj* or *manhaaj* (plural) has numerous analogous meanings when referring to the various

²² The *Mu’tazilla* appeared during the second century *Hijra* and were known for their preference for rationalism over the sacred texts if the texts did not appear to be comprehensible. Some of main tenets of this sect were: their claim that sinners were neither Muslim or disbeliever but between the two spheres of belief, negation of divine decree, and their claim the Qur’an was created (al-Ghamadee 2013).

²³ The *Raafida* were a group from the *Shia* that appeared during the caliphate of ‘Ali the fourth caliph. They were known to be extreme in their exaggeration of ‘Ali, with some considering him divine, and their vilification of most of the Companions (al-Ghamadee 2013).

²⁴ The *Jahmeeya* appeared after the first century *Hijra* and they claimed: the Qur’an was created, negated divine destiny, and negated the divine names and attributes of Allah (al-Ghamadee 2013).

²⁵ *Ahl al-Irja’* refers to those sects which believed that actions or deeds were not a part of faith, contrary to the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna*, who hold that faith is comprised of actions of the limbs, belief in the heart, and statements from the tongue (Green 2009).

²⁶ *Ahl al-Ra’yy* is a general term that denotes individuals or sects, which give preference to logic and analogy when interpreting the sacred texts. There will be further discussion of this methodology in the coming section.

²⁷ *Manhaj* as a term refers to “consistent principles of worship and interactions (including transactions) from Allah’s legislation according to the Book and the *Sunna* with understanding of the pious *Sala*” (al-Jaabiree 2012:37).

²⁸ Critics of *Salafism*, like El Fadl, allege, “Puritans exaggerate the role of the text and minimize the role of the human agent who interprets the religious texts” (2007:96). For El Fadl, *Salafism*’s rigid literalism violates the sanctity of the texts and makes interpretation both whimsical and arbitrary.

Islamic sciences; however, in reference to creedal issues it implies the way of understanding and means of deriving textual evidences.

There are many narrations of the *Salaf* that illustrate their common methodology for understanding Islam, *da'wa*, and how they derived rulings. *Imaam* Abu Haneefa stated, "I take from the Book of Allah, and if I cannot find (the evidence), then from the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw). So, if I cannot find it in the Book of Allah nor the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw), then I take from the statements of his Companions" (al-Khumees 2014:76). In another statement attributed to *Imaam* Abu Haneefa he said, "No one can speak from his opinions when the Book of Allah is present, nor in opposition to the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw), nor in opposition to the consensus of the Companions" (al-Khumees 2014 p.77).²⁹ The *Salaf* were united in creed and their approach to the sacred texts and this is why *Salafee* scholars hold their particular orientation as a pillar of *Salafism* and scholarly legitimacy. A vital pillar of sound *manhaj*, thus religious legitimacy, is rejecting religious heresy. The *Salaf* were ardent in defending the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna*, which forms the basis of religious legitimacy, and explains the fervency of *Salafees* to root out heretical ideologies and its proponents. Ibn Maajashoon (died 212 *Hijra*) stated, "I heard Maalik saying whoever innovates in Islam and believes it to be *hasana* (good) has claimed that Muhammad was deceptive in delivering the message" (al-Shaatibee 2000:2/19). The implication here is that by innovating something, in creed or practice, not legislated by the Qur'an and *Sunna*, a person is implying that the Prophet (saw) was deficient or inadequate in dispensing his duties as a messenger. *Imaam* Shaafi'ee stated, "Allah made it an obligation for mankind to follow His revelation and the *Sunna* of His Messenger" (2010:49). *Imaam* Ahmad stated, "We believe in the sound narrations and judge by them. Everything narrated upon the Prophet (saw) with an

²⁹ *Imaam* Abu Haneefa was known for his use of *ijtihaaad*, *al-ra'yy*, and analogy for deriving rulings as long as these methods did not contravene the Qur'an, an authentic *hadeeth*, or consensus. His extensive use of these concepts was due to the prevalence of a plethora of unauthenticated narrations during his time.

acceptable chain of transmission we believe it and rule by it” (al-Laalakaa’ee 2015:1/157).

Jurisprudence

Salafees claim that their jurisprudential understanding agrees with other *Sunni* schools of law. The main four canonical schools of law in *Sunni* Islam are *Hanifee*, *Maalikee*, *Shaafi’ee*, and *Hanbalee*. Many critics claim *Salafees* have created a new school of thought based upon literalism. Moreover, some critics assert that the *Salafee* school is similar to the *Thaahireeya*,³⁰ who adhered to an extremely literalist approach when understanding and interpreting texts. Although *Salafee* scholars do predominately base their rulings on the apparent meaning of the text this does not mean they do not consider contextual and implicit interpretations. The reason for their literalism is due to their adherence to the following principle: the origin of language is literal unless there is sufficient evidence or reason to support the statement in question or text being figurative (al-‘Uthaimeen 2006: 47). An example in the Qur’an would be the unambiguous command to pray, as it does not require any further explanation regarding the meaning of the command, nor is it to be taken figuratively, but instead by understanding it as a literal command it only requires the worshipper to refer to the *Sunna* for the details how to perform the Islamic prayer. This essentially forms the method for much of the *Salafee* interpretation of religious commands and textual analysis.

Mathhabs and Taqleed

Salafees are often criticized as being rejectionists of traditional schools of thought when it comes to Islamic law. While discussing the influence of *Shaikh* Muhammad

³⁰ *Imaam* Dawood al-Asbahaanee born 200 *hijra* in Kufa, Iraq, was from *Ahl al-Hadeeth* and a student of Abu Thawr a student of *Imaam* Shaafi’ee. *Imaam* Dawood was the founder of the *Thaahireeya* school which arose in opposition to *Ahl al-Ra’yy* (the rationalists) who used analogy and reasoning in many of their jurisprudential rulings. The *Thaahireeya*, the most extreme of the literalists, reject analogy and reasoning, and restrict their rulings and understanding to only the apparent meaning of the text and rulings which have consensus (al-Ashqaar 2005).

ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, who *Salafees* consider a reviver of the *Salafee* creed during the 18th century, Lacroix states: “His basic principle is that the only sources upon which a valid religious judgment can be based are the Qur’an and *Sunna* and the *ijma* (consensus) of the pious ancestors. Theoretically, that comes down to a rejection of the *taqlid* (imitation) of the four canonical legal schools, and to the establishment of *ijtihad* (interpretation) as the pillar of law” (Meijer 2013:60). While this analysis of *Salafism* is a fair assessment in light of the statements of some of its proponents; conversely by analyzing statements of contemporary *Salafee* scholars it can be deduced that they do not all reject *taqleed* in all situations and their *ijtihaad* does not fall outside of the canonical schools of law. *Taqleed* as a terminology refers to “following someone whose statement in and of itself is not evidence” (al-‘Uthaimeen 2006:48).³¹ Since only the Qur’an and *Sunna* are sacred texts to *Salafees*, then by following an *Imaam* unequivocally without evaluating his statement according to sacred texts can lead one to follow false judgments. As with any logical argumentation there must be evidence to support any claims being made. For this reason, *taqleed* differs from *ittibaa’* (following) as the latter refers to following the Prophet (saw) or other uncontested *sharee’a* evidences. *Shaikh* al-Fawzaan states, “And *Imaam* Ahmad is from the *Imaams* of *Ahl al-Sunna*; however he is not infallible. We take from his statements that agree with the evidence just like other than him... this is also (the case of) the *mathhab* of Abu Haneefa or *mathhab* of Maalik, or *mathhab* of Shaafi’ee. All of them were from the *mathhab* of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa’a*” (al-‘Utaibee 2014:27).

In general, *Salafees* do strongly denounce the practice of *taqleed* (blind following) a particular scholar or *mathhab* at the expense of extracting rulings, or interpretation directly from the Qur’an and *hadeeth*. However, this does not mean that all *Salafee* scholars categorically reject the concept. For instance, Ibn ‘Uthaimeen allows for *taqleed* for the layperson who does not possess the ability to deduce rulings and contemplate the scriptural evidences. He also includes the scholar who does not

³¹ Other definitions include accepting the opinion of someone without knowing the evidence for their opinion.

possess the time or specialization in a particular science to rely upon the evidence and conclusions of his peers (2006). This is essentially the argument of many *Salafee* scholars. For instance, *Shaikh* Al-Fawzaan was asked about following a particular *mathhab* and replied:

Yes, the layperson and new student should follow one of the four *mathhabs*, because the layperson follows the *mathhab* of the scholar who makes *fatwa* on his behalf. Therefore, he should choose to follow someone whose knowledge and religion he trusts, and take knowledge from him, because the layperson is ignorant.... As for a person who possesses knowledge and wisdom then he should only follow that which he believes to be in accordance with the strongest evidence (al-'Utaibee 2014:187).

Shaikh al-Albaanee's view was essentially the same as al-Fawzaan's except that he felt the lay person does not really follow a *mathhab* at all, but instead follows the one who makes *fatwa* on his behalf, and this is due to the layman's ignorance of the Qur'an and *Sunna* and inability to make judgments (2011). In contrast, *Shaikh* Muqbil bin Haadee sternly rejected the concept of *taqleed* and seemed to have even a stricter position than many of his *Salafee* counterparts (al-Waadi'ee 2011). However, these opposing stances regarding this issue do not negate the fact they are all considered *Salafee* scholars, and although they had disagreement over such a rudimentary issue they did not call into question each other's legitimacy as *Salafee* scholars.³²

The aversion towards *taqleed* was essentially the view of the *Salaf*.³³ *Imaam* Ahmad stated in this regard, "Do not blindly follow me or Maalik, or Shaafi'ee, or al-Awzaa'ee, or al-Thawree. But rather take from where we took" (Ibn al-Qayyim

³² This differs greatly from the *takfeeree* groups like al-Shabaab and ISIS who delegitimize those who disagree with them and denounce them as apostates, even going so far as to kill their rivals. *Shaikh* Muhammad Amaan al-Jaamee was asked about his opposition to al-Albaanee, his teacher, regarding the issue of a Muslim seeking assistance from a non-Muslim and reiterated the importance of scholarly inquiry and rejecting *taqleed* and he mentioned that his difference with *Shaikh* al-Albaanee did not affect his adoration for him in the least (Al-Jaamee 2016).

³³ While discussing the harms of *taqleed* Ibn al-Qayyim states, "the results of *taqleed* are division and arrogance and its proponents have split the religion and caused sectarianism; every group assisting the one they follow and calling to him and criticizing his opponents. In addition, they do not believe it permissible to practice a differing opinion as if their opponents follow another religion" (2012: 1/176).

2012:1/175). *Imaam Ahmad* was known for his strict observation of the *Sunna*, reliance on *hadeeth*, exhortation to analyze the sacred texts, and rejection, of *taqleed*. From the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna* is that no scholar, *Imaam*, or even a Companion is considered infallible warranting *taqleed* in every issue. *Imaam Maalik* said, “Everyone’s statements can be accepted or rejected except the Prophet’s (saw)” (2011:4/37). Probably the primary reason for the *Salaf*’s rejection of *taqleed* was that conceptually it requires rigid obedience to the opinions of men regardless of their usage or adherence to primary religious sources: the Qur’an and *Sunna*. Therefore, by practicing *taqleed* one does not consider, or may be unaware of, the potential for deviation from the divine texts and their intended explicative meanings. Furthermore, *taqleed* often is seen as the cause for various groups to make *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a* to their *Shaikh* or *mathhab*, which has many harmful effects upon the Muslim community. For example, some scholars of the past considered it invalid to pray behind *Imaams* who followed a different *mathhab* even going so far as to prohibit intermarriage between *mathhabs*.

Some scholars suggest that through the evolution of the canonical schools of jurisprudence much of the founders’ approach to creed, and even methodology have been lost. For example, many contemporary texts refer to contemporary schools of thought vs. the classical ones. For instance, some contemporary Maalikee scholars believe it to be impermissible to pray two units of prayer as a greeting for the mosque before sitting down while the *Imaam* is preaching. Still others prohibit praying between the call to prayer and sunset prayer. *Imaam Maalik* had two views regarding these issues and one of his views was that they were recommended acts, which was in accordance with authentic narrations on the Prophet (saw) (‘Uthmaan 2011). Another example, but from the Shaafi’ee *mathhab*, is the issue of declaring openly one’s intention before performing an act of worship other than the pilgrimage. *Imaam A’laa al-Deen al-Shaafi’ee* scholar who died the year 72 *Hijra*, states, “To openly declare intention by raising one’s voice and disturbing worshippers is prohibited by consensus. (Declaring intention) without raising the voice is considered a wicked innovation... and this is a rejection of the

view of those who say this is a sound *Sunna*" (al-Kalbaanee 2016:12). Many of the proponents of the contemporary schools believe that their views are representative of the original creed and methodology of the *Imaams* of the *mathhab*s; however, many of the schools of thought have evolved in both fundamental and subsidiary issues. Dr. Umar al- Ashqaar believes:

It is imperative to point out that every *mathhab* includes statements and legal opinions from the *Imaam* of that *mathhab*. Likewise, it includes all the statements and legal opinions of the scholars of that *mathhab*. Therefore, it is not possible to claim all viewpoints are from the originator of the *mathhab* (2005:115).

Here al-Ashqaar points out that all legal rulings of a given *mathhab* are not indicative of the *Imaam*'s position and this also appears to include creed and methodology. *Imaam* al-Nawawee said, "Every issue that you find two opinions for Shaafi'ee, may Allah have mercy on him: old and new, then the new statement is correct and should be practiced, because the old view has been revised" (Al-Nawawee 1996:1/17). Many scholars who follow a particular *mathhab* have strayed from the creed held by the original *Imaam* while still associating with the *mathhab*. *Imaam* al-Samaa'nee, a former *Hanifee* scholar turned Shaafi'ee (died 489 *hijra*), stated, "It is not acceptable that a person supports his *mathhab* in subsidiary issues then traverses another path regarding fundamental issues" (al-Kalbaanee 2016:15). This view is stressed by contemporary *Salafees* as they mostly reject the notion of a scholar being for example Maalikee in *fiqh* but *Asha'ree* in creed, as this in their view is inconsistent with the creed and *manhaj* of *Imaam* Maalik. In contrast to the *Salafee* view many scholars, especially *Asha'rees*, consider it a legitimate classification to distinguish scholars by both creed and *fiqh*, as has been a practice for most of Islamic history.³⁴ *Shaikh* al-Islam ibn Taimeeya stated, "And the *Imaams* like Maalik and *Ahmad*... and other than them mention the negative of heretics, disavowing, and punishing of them as Allah willed. The groups that blindly follow them were well aware of these positions. Then they mixed the *Sunna* with heresy" (Ibn Taimeeya 2015:81). The *mathhab*s of the canonical schools have evolved over

³⁴ In many of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab's writings he referred to himself as *Salafee* in creed *hanbalee* in *fiqh*.

time and some of the later proponents differed with regards to creed and methodology from the original position of the *Imaams* in all but some *fiqh* rulings.

Rationalism and *Mathhab al-Ra'yy*

Salafees believe sacred texts are to be analyzed literally before deriving rulings, and that this forms the methodology for understanding the fundamentals of the religion, whereas other traditional schools like the Rationalists view intellectual rationalization should guide interpretation of the divine texts. Issues of creed are understood directly from the Qur'an and *Sunna* and the recurring themes and principles espoused therein. Essentially this means that the *mathhab* of the *Salaf* was to accept the divine texts in a literal context regardless of whether they understood its full logical import. In contrast, the Rationalists attempted to understand the implied logic and rationalized the texts, which, they reasoned, was essential to understanding the texts. Ibn al-Qayyim states, "It is from the foundation of their religion that they build upon analogy which necessitates rejecting much of the *Sunna*...and no doubt those rationalists were denounced by the *Salaf* due to excessive use of improper analogies in codifying religious principles" (2006:1/115). *Ahl al-Kalaam* in their zeal for refuting anthropomorphism established their creed and arguments based upon logic. "Influenced, at least in part, by Greek and Christian philosophy, they used logic to construct arguments supporting the existence of God and the concept of tawhid" (Wiktorowicz 2005:5). An even more scathing criticism of the *Ahl al-Kalaam* came from Ibn Taimeeya when he states,

Ahl al-Kalaam are the people most in doubt and confusion, and the weakest in knowledge and certainty, and this is something they admit themselves and people witness from them. For this reason, you find that they change from one statement to another. At one-point firm upon an opinion, then stern in contradicting the same view at another time and making *takfeer* of the one who holds their prior view, which is the biggest proof of their lack of certainty (Ibn Taimeeya 1996:5/178).

This statement of Ibn Taimeeya sums up the general *Salafee* assessment of *Ahl al-Kalaam* and many of their contemporary manifestations like the *Asha'rees*.

Another classical school of thought that differed from *Ahl al-Hadeeth* was the *mathhab* of *Ahl al-Ra'yy*. This long-standing tradition also was existent at the time of the *Salaf*, however, it is considered at odds with *Salafee* methodology.³⁵ This school forms a more interpretive approach to understanding both creed and jurisprudence. The *mathhab* of *Ahl al-Ra'yy* initially was not a school of thought or even a methodology, but initially referred to *ijtihad*, which did not contradict the texts of the Qur'an and *Sunna*. This *ijtihad* was known to the Companions prior to the death of the Prophet (saw) as illustrated in the following *hadeeth*. The Prophet (saw) sent Mu'aadh, a Companion, to Yemen to invite the Yemenis to Islam and adjudicate between them. The Prophet (saw) said, "How will you adjudicate if you need to make judgment? He said, I will judge by the Book of Allah. He said, if you do not find it in the Book of Allah? He replied, I will judge by the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw), He said, if you do not find it in the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw)? He said, I will strive upmost with my intellect " (Abu Dawood 2008:1/134). The classical scholars referred to this *hadeeth* as evidence for *ijtihad* and using analogy from the Qur'an and *Sunna*. The *Taabi'een* also followed the methodology of the Companions to deduce rulings by referencing the Qur'an and *Sunna* and if they encountered new issues they would refer to the rulings of the Companions and if they were unable to find a ruling they would resort to *ijtihad* (al-Ashqaar 2005).³⁶ Therefore, if a new issue arises that has no precedence in divine texts it requires the use of *ijtihad*.

The *Ra'yy* that was considered unacceptable by the *Taabi'een* and was refuted extensively in the books of the *Salaf*, was that which was without reference to the

³⁵ *Al-Ra'yy* rejected by the *Salaf* was that which contradicted divine texts or was considered whimsical by the *Salaf*. *Imaam* Maaik states, "The Messenger of Allah (saw) died and the religion was completed with perfection. Therefore, it is necessary to follow the *Athaar* of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and not follow personal opinion. Because whenever you follow personal opinion another man appears with a stronger view and you will follow him, Therefore, whenever someone appears who overcomes your argument you will follow him and I believe this will never cease " (al-Shaatibee 2000:1/186).

³⁶ *Ijtihad* should not be confused with the practice of *bid'a*, which includes those beliefs, practices, and actions that contradict the divine text or foundation principles of Islam.

sacred texts and based primarily upon opinion. *Imaam* al-Shaatibee states, “In any event, after everything previously discussed, the *Ra’yy* that is rejected is that which is based upon ignorance, whimsical, and without any (*sharee’a*) origin (2000: 1/187). ‘Umar bin ‘Abd Al-Azeez wrote, “There is no acceptable opinion that is contrary to the *Sunna* laid down by the Messenger of Allah (saw)” (al-Ashqaar 2005:52). Using analogy and reasoning in making jurisprudential verdicts is considered a level of *sharee’a* evidence; however, it does not supersede Qur’anic texts or the *Sunna*. *Imaam* Shaafi’ee while discussing the various levels of evidence stated, “We judge with the consensus, then analogy; however analogy is weaker than consensus and it is used out of necessity, because it is not permissible to use analogy when there is a *hadeeth* present” (cited in al-Ashqaar 2005 p.27). In addition, *al-Ra’yy* was severely rejected by the *Salaf* in creedal matters. Ibn Abee ‘Aasim (died 287 *hijra*) said, “I have seen *hadeeth* which encouraged asceticism in this world, hope in the hereafter, following the righteous and saints, encouraging one towards piety, and leaving what does not concern a person, for that which concerns him” (al-Asbahaanee 2012:17). The *Salaf* considered unfounded opinion a distraction from religious duties and a distortion of the limits set by the Qur’an and *Sunna*, and in some cases a means to apostasy.

Differences

Ahl al-Hadeeth (who *Salafees* closely imitate), *Ahl al-Kalaam*, and *Ahl al-Ra’yy*, all possess some key methodological differences, which have been a source of contention throughout Islamic history. For the purpose of this study two types of differences will be scrutinized: *ikhtilaaf tadaad* (irreconcilable differences), which describes the difference between *Ahl al-Hadeeth* and its rivals, and *ikhtilaaf tanawwu’* (slight interpretive difference). These two categories will be analyzed with the aim of showing that differences do not necessarily negate one’s adherence to the *Salafee* creed and *manhaj*.

The first category is *ikhtilaaf tadaad*, which refers to two contradictory interpretations while accepting one of them as correct. *Imaam* Shaafi'ee, in his discussion of the impermissible differences which highlights the concept of *ikhtilaaf tadaad*, stated, "It is not permissible for a knowledgeable person to differ with anything that Allah has established as clear evidence in His book, or been clarified on the tongue of His Messenger (saw)" (1940:16). In light of this, the clear prohibition of usury in the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and by consensus is hardly ever an issue of contention; however, there are contemporary debates, especially in western countries, about the necessity to pay usury on a bank loan and what constitutes necessity, which fall under the classification of *ikhtilaaf tadaad*.

The second category is *ikhtilaaf tanawwu'*. This refers to when there is more than one acceptable interpretation of a verse or *hadeeth* and the various interpretations do not constitute an irreconcilable contradiction in meaning (al-Ma'ithar 2013:27). It was reported that *Imaam* Sufyaan bin 'Ayeena (died 198 *hijra*) said, "There is no difference in the explanation of the Qur'an. Verily, it is comprehensive in meaning..." (al-Ma'ithar 2013:28). Here the *Imaam* was underscoring that although some exegesis from the *Salaf* differed that it was possible in many instances to accommodate more than one view if they did not contradict one another within reason.

The literalism of *Salafism* has caused some critics to assert that *Salafees* do not allow any room for interpretive discourse claiming that "there is really no such thing as interpretation-sources either sanction or prohibit particular beliefs, choices, and behavior; there is a single truth, as revealed by the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad; and there is no room for interpretive differences or religious pluralism" (Wiktorowicz 2005:4). However, interpretive differences are allowed by *Salafees*, especially with regards to matters of jurisprudence and Qur'anic exegesis and there are countless examples to substantiate this (al-Ma'ithar 2013).

Reasons for Differences

Some of the predominant reasons listed by Ibn Taimeeya for scholarly differences are:

1. a lack of one scholar encountering a *hadeeth* used as evidence
2. that a scholar may doubt the authenticity of a *hadeeth* in question
3. differences in comprehension and interpretation of divine texts
4. differences in jurisprudent school of thought and the principles used to deduce rulings
5. differences in judgment and reasoning due to lack of explicit textual evidence (al-Ma'ithar 2013).

Examples of How *Ahl al-Sunna* Dealt with Errors

As was mentioned previously scholarly differences are not always the result of heresy and *Salafees* do acknowledge that there are legitimate differences and interpretations especially in *fiqh* issues. “Look to see how the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna* deal with al-Nawawee, Ibn Hajr, and Ibn Khuzaima who the scholars classified as the leader of the *Imaams*. Even though he made mistakes and misinterpreted (some issues) in creed. However, he strove in seeking and spreading knowledge and serving the *Sunna*” (al-Suhaimee 2016:73).

From an *athaar* of the *Salaf* it was reported that *Imaam* Asbahaanee said, “Muhammad bin Khuzaima made a mistake regarding the *hadeeth* of *al-suwwar* (the picture) and he was not disparaged because of that. Rather this view is not to be accepted from him and that is it” (Ibn Taimeeya 2005:81).

This gives insight into the *mathhab* of the *Salaf* showing that they did not take one position regarding a scholar's mistakes, but instead the status of the scholar was considered, their adherence to the *Sunna*, and whether they were known for bias or not was also taken into consideration. Also, it can be deduced that even a scholar who errs in creed, although refuted, is not rejected. This also forms an integral part of the *Salafee manhaj* with regards to dealing with a scholar's errors.

Shaikh Rabee'a al-Madkhalee was asked about individuals who fall into religious innovation and he replied, "Whoever innovates clearly like saying the Qur'an is created or supplicates or slaughters sacrificial animals to other than Allah, or some other clear innovation then he is declared heretical. However, if it is something minute and the person is striving to attain the truth and errs, then he is not declared a heretic initially" (2009:27). This illustrates that the *Salafee* approach is not always clear-cut, although it is often oversimplified, with even laypersons engaging in the complexities of *tabdee'*, to the dismay of *Salafee* scholars. The often-overlooked means of dealing with a scholar that errs is that "he should be advised, and his mistake be clarified, then (if he does not repent) he is declared an innovator" (2009:257). Ibn Taimeeya states, "If an esteemed scholar is known for his honesty, sincerity, opposing heresy, and calling to the *Sunna* and warning against innovation then for some reason he commits a small innovation, then we do not rush to declare him a heretic. This is the correct view. Because if we ruled everyone who fell into a heresy as a heretic there would be no one from the scholars of Islam who would be safe" (2006:75).

In addition to the above categories *Salafees* also have a criterion for how they treat and react to other *Salafees'* mistakes and the mistakes of other groups who differ with them. This precedence can be found in the statements of classical scholars from the *Salaf* like *Imaam* Barbahaaree (died 329 *Hijra*) who said:

Understand that leaving the path occurs in two ways: The first way is a man could deviate from the path and he only desired good. Therefore, do not imitate his errors because he is destroyed. The other is a person who is arrogant regarding the truth and he contradicts the pious who preceded him, so he is misguided and misguides others (2009:12).

From *athaar*³⁷ such as this *Salafees* explain that a scholar who is known for his service and dedication to the *Sunna*, and sound creed and *manhaj* is excused for his mistakes although his errors should be warned against while maintaining his scholarly status. The other case is when the individual in question is not considered

³⁷ The term is used to denote narrations of the *Salaf*.

Salafee and errs, then this person is warned against as well as his mistakes in order to prevent his *da'wa* from spreading throughout the community (al-Jaabiree 2012). Bin 'Uthaimeen states about those individuals who rush to make judgments upon others regarding perceived mistakes:

It is upon those youth to contextualize what takes place between the scholars in the most positive light, and if the issue pertains to *ijtihad*, then excuse them for their mistake. There is no problem with speaking to them about the issue they believe they were mistaken about to clarify whether the mistake is from them or those who claim it was a mistake. Because sometimes a person believes a scholar has made a mistake then after discussion it becomes clear he was correct... As far as rejoicing about a scholar's error to spread it amongst people the division and is not the way of the *Salaf* (2011:43).

Hizbeeya

Hizbeeya (partisanship) is the antithesis of the *Salafee da'wa*. The concept of partisanship to other than Islam and the *Sunna* is considered one of the biggest violations of the principles of *Salafism*. "The *Salafee da'wa* contests *hizbeeya* in every way. The reason is entirely clear. The *Salafee da'wa* is affiliated with an infallible person, and he is the Messenger of Allah (saw). Therefore, the one who leaves their *da'wa* cannot be considered *Salafee*. As for other groups, they are affiliated with individuals who are fallible" (al-Albaanee 2011:3/139). This claim by al-Albaanee highlights the perception that *Salafees* follow a purist approach to Islam and that partisanship is considered an unsubstantiated aberration from true Islam and therefore illegitimate.

Salafee scholars abhor *hizbeeya*, which is why there are countless lectures, sermons, and books dedicated to the topic. The view held by many *Salafee* scholars is that practical application of the *Salafee manhaj* is the only means of removing oneself from false partisanship. Al-Waadi'ee states:

Our scholars in their books named others as *Ahl al-Sunna* and *Salafee*. Nevertheless, the actual practice of (of some individuals) contradicts the

label. You claim you are *Ahl al-Hadeeth* and you have no knowledge about *hadeeth*. You claim that you are *Ahl Sunna*, while you have no desire to study the *Sunna* or act by it. You declare, 'I am *Salafee*' all the while you call to division and separation between Muslims (1999:218).

This statement also shows the emphasis with which *Salafees* place on the acquisition of what they perceive to be correct knowledge of the various Islamic sciences, as well as the importance of self-purification, and adherence to Islamic rituals, all of which serve as a deterrence to *hizbeeya*. *Shaikh* al-Fawzaan states,

A *Hizbee* is the person who is with a group that differs from the correct *manhaj*: *manhaj* of the Book and the *Sunna*. Allah states, 'They divided their affairs between them with every group pleased with what they are upon.' They divided after they left the Book of Allah and the *Sunna* of His Messenger (saw), and choose contradictory paths, methodologies, and groups, thus they became sinners (al-'Utaibee 2014:19).

Although the concept of *hizbeeya* has a negative connotation in *Salafee* literature, the term *hizb* (group) has both a positive and negative usage in the Qur'an. *Hizb* is used to refer to the partisans of Allah as successful and good, and the partisans of the Devil as sinful losers. The Qur'an explicitly describes the partisans of Allah as those who follow His commands, avoid His prohibitions, and practice the concept of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a*. Allah states in the Qur'an:

You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment Loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger even if they were their fathers, or sons, or brothers, or kin. They are those whose hearts have been written with faith... Verily, the partisans of Allah are the successful ones (1996 58:22).

From the aforementioned verse the partisans of Allah are described by loyalty and allegiance to the believers in general terms; however, *Salafees* specify that allegiance to the truth takes precedence; however, their claim is that the more adherent one is to Allah's commands: the *Salafee* creed, and *manhaj*, the more they are deserving of loyalty and adoration. The blameworthy *hizb* as mentioned in the Qur'an refers to deviation from the commands of the Qur'an. Allah says, "They are the partisans of Satan. Verily, the party of Satan will be the losers" (1996 58:22).

Characteristics of *Hizbeeya*

One of the common traits of *hizbee* groups is fanaticism according to *Salafee* scholars. Al-Najmee states, “A person being fanatical for his group and aiding them even though they are wrong is not permissible...it is only permissible to stand up for the truth” (2013:7). Al-Waadi’ee states, “The fanaticism of *hizbeeya* is isolation. The *Hizbee* does not want any good for anyone except those inside his group” (1999:31) Fanatical behavior based upon partisanship is the main cause of division and animosity, which even affects recent converts to Islam. By ushering converts into existing controversy between scholars or causing them to focus on provocative and complex issues which they are unable to grasp and forcing them to choose sides, or have an uninformed opinion about a particular issue, groups foment discord and partisanship. For example, some new Muslims are sometimes coerced into choosing a particular viewpoint or asked to warn against a particular person or group of individuals whom they are unfamiliar of. On the other hand, recent converts might be asked to accept and follow other individuals or groups without questioning. This creates disharmony between Muslims and is a trait of *hizbeeya* (al-Suhaimee 2016). *Salafee* scholars warn that unwarranted or excessive criticism of scholars coupled with fanaticism is also a trait of *hizbeeya*. At times a student may devote extensive time and energy to following up the faults of scholars or seeking to defame them when they err instead of the intended purpose, which is to clarify the truth (al-Suhaimee 2016). While discussing the importance and status of religious scholars *Shaikh* al-Fawzaan said:

No one reviles the honor of the scholars from religious people of the truth except that they are one of three individuals: a hypocrite known for hypocrisy, or a wicked person who detests them because they prohibit his sinfulness, or a misguided *Hizbee*, who reviles them because they do not sanction his partisanship and misguided ideology (2011:46-47).

Some individuals who do not possess sound knowledge engage in criticizing individuals and cause more harm than good. The *Salafee da’wa*, according to *Salafees*, is about both individual and societal rectification through adherence to the

pristine sources of the faith, which can only bring about the maximum good. Therefore, *hizbeeya*, its antithesis, brings about division, and is a distortion of those principles. Excessive criticism of the scholars is deemed to be a direct attack upon those who interpret the divine texts. Al-Suhaimee states regarding individuals who censure scholars unduly, “It is not permissible for them to busy with the science of criticizing and praising individuals before they understand knowledge and become grounded in its principles” (2016:49).

The aforementioned characteristics are just some of the traits of *hizbeeya* mentioned by *Salafee* scholars. Moreover, it is worth noting that the view held by many scholars is that an individual *Salafee* may possess a trait of *hizbeeya* but he or she may not be considered a *Hizbee* unless a certain criterion is observed.³⁸

Problems with Contemporary Classifications

Amongst academics there is immense controversy surrounding the origin of *Salafism*, its usage as an expression, and the relevance and implications of its classification. Conflicting data about the origin of *Salafism*, especially from outside sources, and the context in which the term *Salafee* is used in are generally not issues which *Salafees* must contend with as they deem their origin to be from the original *Salaf*. However, *Salafees* are forced into the discussion to defend their paradigm against the various presumptions and negative connotations of the term *Salafism*. For this reason, analysis of *Salafism* becomes necessary to cast off old conventions, which have an impact upon the bias of academics and implications for policy.

Putting away standard assumptions about *Salafiyya* further helps us to notice the conspicuous absence of any discussion of a concept called *Salafism* in either Muslim or non-Muslim scholarship until about the

³⁸ Ibn Taimeeya detailed the issues of *takfeer* and *tabdee*’ extensively in his writings and *Salafee* scholars often refer to his verdicts. In sum, *Salafee* scholars are well aware of the dangers of fanaticism and that an individual *Salafee* can at one time or another display these sinful traits. The consistency at an individual’s display of *hizbeeya* is to be considered before ruling one as a *hizbee*.

1920s... one thing is clear from the sources: prior to the last hundred years, scholars, regardless of their background, did not use the notion of *Salafism*, nor did they define it or argue about it (Lauzie're 2016:23).

While there is a need for breaking with the many suppositions about *Salafees* and *Salafism*, especially from outside secondary sources, which this study aims to achieve, it must be noted that *Salafism* was codified from the time of *Ahl al-Hadeeth*, although not explicitly used as a term. Secondly, the creed itself, *manhaj*, and sources have existed, and been documented, since the time of the Companions. Thirdly, various names have been used overtime by *Sunnis* to denote the same creedal orientation, which shows that *Sunnis* have used descriptors from the time of the *Taabi'een* with *Salafism* being included in this long tradition.

Most researchers in the West categorize *Salafees* into distinct trends of thought which often overlap one another. Consequently, these categorizations complicate defining *Salafism* rendering the classification meaningless due to being over inclusive. This tendency by academics to include such varying trends into one simplified category is imprecise and many of those classified subjects contradict underlying *Salafee* principles. For example, Olidort mistakenly classifies *Salafees* with *Jihaadees* when he posits:

Whereas Islamists and jihadists [*sic*] seek specific political ends (for Example the establishment of a caliphate), and at times have compromised traditional teachings in pursuit of these ends, Salafists' first priority is to correct the means that Muslims use to meet their ends, their method. This is why so-called quietist Salafists advocate for involvement in some cases and restraint in others-the driving factor being whether action or inaction in a particular case is in keeping with what the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate followers would have done in a similar situation (2015:5).³⁹

While all those groups have Islamic objectives, *Salafees* claim to adhere to a specified set of principles derived from the sacred texts and those groups or individuals that do not enact those principles cannot accurately be referred to as

³⁹ Olidart conflates both Islamists, who aspire to Islamicize the state usually through political means and the *jihaadists*, who attempt to overthrow existing regimes through violence.

Salafee as their means for obtaining their goals are considered un-Islamic and therefore unjustified. Another example of incongruous categorization is that modernists like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida are also often classified as *Salafee* due to their usage of the term *Salafee* to refer to their movements “leading some observers to erroneously conclude a common ideological lineage” (Wiktorowicz 2005:6). While many academics classify *Salafee* and *jihaadee-takfeeree* scholars together, although their *manhaj* and approach may differ, it serves as a disservice to honest academic discourse. Bin Ali asserts, “While most Salafis are unanimous on matters of *aqidah* [sic], they are divided mainly in issues of jurisprudence and politics” (2012:52). This statement does not consider the criterion *Salafees* themselves use to determine who is *Salafee* and who is not. Bin Ali incorporates many non-*Salafee* adherents who clearly contradict *Salafee manhaj* with some espousing critical differences in creed from what is propagated by *Salafee* scholars. One such example he uses is Faisal al-Jamaikee and his concept of *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a* which is clearly at odds with *Salafee* scholars. Faisal’s fundamental view of *al-wala’a wa bara’a* results in excessive use of the concept of *takfeer* and abuse of its principles. This misclassification shows the common pitfall many academics fall into by overgeneralizing *Salafism* by ignoring important criterion and polemics used by *Salafee* scholars in their literature. Bin Ali, as he himself asserts, uses the often-cited classification of Wiktorowicz, which divides *Salafees* into three distinct categories: purists, politicos, and *jihaadees*. According to Wiktorowicz, purists are those most associated with religious purity and for taking an apolitical stance regarding worldly issues. The second classification being politicos who are essentially a hybrid movement of activist scholars who support much of the politicking of the Muslim Brotherhood along with general adherence to the *Salafee* creed. The third category being the *jihaadees* who claim to espouse *Salafee* creed emphasizing principles of *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a*, *takfeer*, and *jihaad* with the aim of establishing a pure Islamic state.

Another problem observed with many of the contemporary academics’ critique of *Salafism* is their excessive use of secondary sources instead of the primary sources

of *Salafee* scholarly discourse. This in turn further reinforces many of the negative preconceived notions of *Salafism* while at the same time distorting the general perception of the *da'wa* stunting real academic analysis and discourse. “The only way forward is to recognize that the secondary literature is often part of the problem, not part of the solution. As long as we allow preconceptions and ready-made paradigms to determine the parameters of our historical investigations we shall remain prisoners of our own mythologies” (Lauzie're 2016:13). Another example of inaccurate classification is Bin Ali's citing of Morten Storm, Abu Osama al-Denmarkee, once a stern critic of *Salafees*, as a credible *Salafee* scholar.⁴⁰ A recent Rand report reads:

The Salafi-jihadi [*sic*] organization ISI evolved from AQI, officially formed by al-Zarqawi in October 2004. ISI was Salafi [*sic*] in that it adhered to an ideological strain in Sunni Islam that seeks to emulate, as purer, the thinking and practices of the prophet Muhammad and the earliest generations of Muslims. It was jihadi [*sic*] in that it believed that violent struggle against non-Muslims and Muslims it judged to be apostate is an important religious duty” (Johnston 2016:4).

It is very common for Western academics to classify *Salafees* with other contemporary trends and movements as the Rand report illustrates. The common assumption is that “there are various types of modern *Salafi* [*sic*] groups. While most *Salafis* [*sic*] are unanimous in matters of aqidah [*sic*], they are divided mainly in issues of jurisprudence and politics” (bin Ali 2012:52). Another example of how many academics assign individuals and groups rejected by *Salafees* as representative of the *da'wa* is the case of Muhammad Surur. Steinberg posits Muhammad Surur is “the head of a Salafi [*sic*] trend called ‘Sururiya’- a term rejected by Sururis [*sic*] themselves. In his teachings, Surur combines *Salafi* thought and practice in the tradition of Ibn Taymiyya...with the revolutionary concepts of the Muslim Brotherhood as worked out by Sayyid Qutb” (Meijer

⁴⁰ The credentials of Morten Storm are dubious at best as he was a former convert to Islam, turned informant for various intelligence agencies who later became apostate according to his own account (2014). He was not known for scholarship or representative of any *Salafee* school and this researcher was personally acquainted with him in Yemen. While Bin Ali may have attempted to show a broad spectrum of *Salafee* ideologues it shows the common pitfall many academics fall into when attempting to find authentic *Salafee* sources.

2013:120). Just as Muhammad Surur and his followers reject the term *Sururee*, *Salafees* reject them as *Salafee* and consider classifications such as *Sururee-Salafee* or *Salafee-Jihaadee* to be misnomers. Primarily this is because of contrasts in important aspects of creed or *manhaj* between *Salafees* and groups who may share some of their base interpretations of creedal tenets. For example, due to the fact of differences in application of issues such as *takfeer* and *jihad*, which become contested methodological points, *Salafees* would never classify Muhammad Surur and his followers as *Salafee*. “These labels are intended to provide better tools for analysis, but it must be remembered that they are often imposed by outsiders. Moreover, they attempt to capture differences on questions pertaining to politics and the use of violence, which, although important are not at the core of purist *Salafism*” (Lauzie’re 2016:9). Academics like Wagemakers assert that differences between *Salafees* and *jihaadees*, like the infamous al-Maqdisi, are only in methodology or *manhaj* “the ideas on al-Maqdisi’s underlying justification of jihad [sic] against the rulers – kufr and takfir [sic] - are virtually the same as those of some quietists. That is ‘aqida, [sic] however” (2012:75). Wagemakers concludes that *Salafees* and *jihaadees* share a common creed, but differ in *manhaj*. However, according to the *Salafee* paradigm it is an absolute requirement that one’s creed and *manhaj* are both consistent. Whether an actor is considered *Salafee* or not is entirely dependent upon this uniformity. To the outsider this may seem trivial, but for *Salafees* it is paramount, and for research purposes and proper classification it is necessary to consider the criterion and *manhaj* according to *Salafee* literature.

It appears that according to the principles of creed and methodology already discussed in this research that those classified as being ‘purist’ by Wiktorowicz and others are the most befitting of being labeled as *Salafees*. *Salafees* themselves reject the other two classifications due to issues of methodology. The other categories do not fit within the framework of the *Salafee da’wa* because of clear *manhaj* differences and distortions of important aspects of the *Salafee* creed. For example, the case of ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Abd al-Khaaliq, whom Wiktorowicz has labeled as a politico because of his organization’s political activism amalgamated

with elements of the *Salafee* creed. ‘Abd al-Khaaliq’s open criticism of *Salafee* scholars as well as his activism contains more elements of *Ikhwaan al-Muslimeen*’s *manhaj* than *Salafees*. These violations of *manhaj*, according to many *Salafee* scholars, warrant expulsion from the *Salafee da’wa*.⁴¹

In contrast, *Salafees* usually take the argument that they restrict themselves to *sharee’a* politics. They prefer to align themselves closely with *sharee’a*-based principles, which reinforce societal stability by considering the harms and benefits of their activism. From amongst the commonly observed characteristics of *Salafees* through their literature is that they are not interested in leadership and authority in general but may take a position regarding general affairs that affect Muslims as long as it does not contradict political stability and threaten current Muslim leadership.⁴²

Dissimilar to the *jihadee* paradigm *Salafees* believe the means do not justify the ends. *Salafees* strictly adhere to principles such as ‘the means carries the same ruling as what was intended.’ *Imaam* Shaafi’ee explained this principle in his book *Al-Umm* by stating, “the means to that which is lawful and unlawful resembles the same meaning as that which is lawful and unlawful” (2004:70). For example, if a Muslim were to use a vehicle to attend a nightclub, a prohibited action, then the usage of the automobile to fulfill this purpose would also incur sin, as its intended outcome was immoral. On the other hand, the Muslim who drives his vehicle to attend prayer or a study circle is rewarded for his use of his vehicle (the means) as well as the action of prayer or study. A more relevant illustration might be the contemporary trend amongst *jihadists* to use car bombs to attack soft targets or in combat. According to *Salafee* scholars these actions constitute suicide and are illegitimate in aim and means. According to the principle, as presented by *Imaam*

⁴¹Some of the methodological differences held by ‘Abd al-Khaaliq documented by Suhaimee are: his stance towards contemporary leaders, *da’wa* priorities, *takfeer* and *jihad* (2005:186).

⁴² Even regarding the conflict in Syria *Salafee* scholars were against the initial protest against the Syrian regime citing protests as heretical and against the *manhaj*. Although *Salafee* scholars are unanimous in their *takfeer* of Bashar al-Assad they did not call for a coup or protests due to the perceived inability of his opposition to remove him and the potential for widespread bloodshed.

Shaafi'ee, the means (suicide bombing) does not justify the ends (potential victory on the battlefield), therefore, since the means is unlawful the result is considered unlawful, and this is without considering the carnage and civilian casualties that often result in these types of operations.

Wiktorowicz posits regarding *Salafee* and *Hizbee* amalgamation “Salafis [sic] share this religious perspective, divisions have emerged as a result of the inherently subjective nature of applying religion to new issues and problems... The splits are about contextual analysis, not belief” (2005:2). However, for *Salafees* creed, *manhaj* and strategy all overlap, so this appears to be an oversimplification to fulfill the need to understand *Salafism* as a phenomenon. For *Salafees*, a defect in creed is reflected in *manhaj* and or strategy.

Other academics like Hegghamer maintain that “the term Salafism [...] is a theological, not a political category” (Meijer 2013:250). He suggests that the category has little value due to the diverse political actors and stances that fall under the *Salafee* banner. Again, *Salafees* would contend that many of the actions and methodology of those actors contradict *Salafism*.

Salafees and *Jihaadees* both reference Ibn Taimeeya as well as a host of classical scholars to substantiate their core beliefs. Due to this some academics allege “the different uses of Ibn Taymiyya [sic] are not a matter of belief; all of the factions accept him as a Salafi [sic] scholar par excellence. Divergent conclusions about which of his writings to emphasize are contingent on contextual interpretation, not theology” (Wiktorowicz 2005:10). The mere fact that both *Salafees* and *jihaadists* reference Ibn Taimeeya does not show that both groups are similar in origin because their methodologies and outcomes tend to be divergent. For example, one cannot equate the *Salafee* methodology of *da'wa* with excessive *takfeer* accompanied by violence and mayhem often espoused by *Jihaadee* ideologues (Green 2009).

One must not be hasty in drawing the conclusion that because some groups have overlapping characteristics that they are the same, and thus should be classified as such. Groups that share some aspects of the *Salafee* creed but hold a divergent view regarding the applicability of *takfeer* or the means and conditions of *jihaad* should not be considered *Salafee* as the criterion put forth in this research illustrates. The term *Salafee* becomes meaningless if academics continue to overgeneralize or by broadening the precepts of *Salafism* too wide.

In sum, the commonly held assumption is that *Salafism* is comprised of three unique strands: purist, politico, and *jihaadee*. “The purists refrain from taking part in politics as they believe it corrupts the sanctity of the religion. The politicians see the participation in politics as an important means to address pressing problems. Finally, the Jihadis [*sic*] believe in physically opposing regimes and their opponents in order to uphold what they believe is proper” (bin Ali 2012:65).

Jihaadee-Takfeeree Paradigm

For the purpose of this research it is necessary to analyze the *Jihaadee* exemplar, as they are most commonly confused with *Salafees*. Before analyzing the paradigm of *jihaadist-takfeeree* groups it is important to define the terms *jihaadee* and *takfeeree*. The term *jihaadee* refers to those individuals or groups, which require or encourage violence as a force of political change as a *manhaj* (Green 2009). This excludes the Islamic concept of *jihaad*, which has been explained and codified by Muslim scholars as being a collective duty under Muslim leadership as a means of defending the community or an offensive *jihaad* guided by *sharee’a* principles and objectives. Therefore, a *jihaadee manhaj* is a consistent call for violence or threat of violence, which is considered the only means of political change in violation of *sharee’a* principles or objectives. The term *takfeeree* refers to those individuals or groups, which flout the principles of *takfeer* either by being excessive in their judgments, ignorant, or totally disregarding Islamic law and precepts. Egerton, although he blurs the categories of *Salafees* and *jihaadees*, claims “Militant

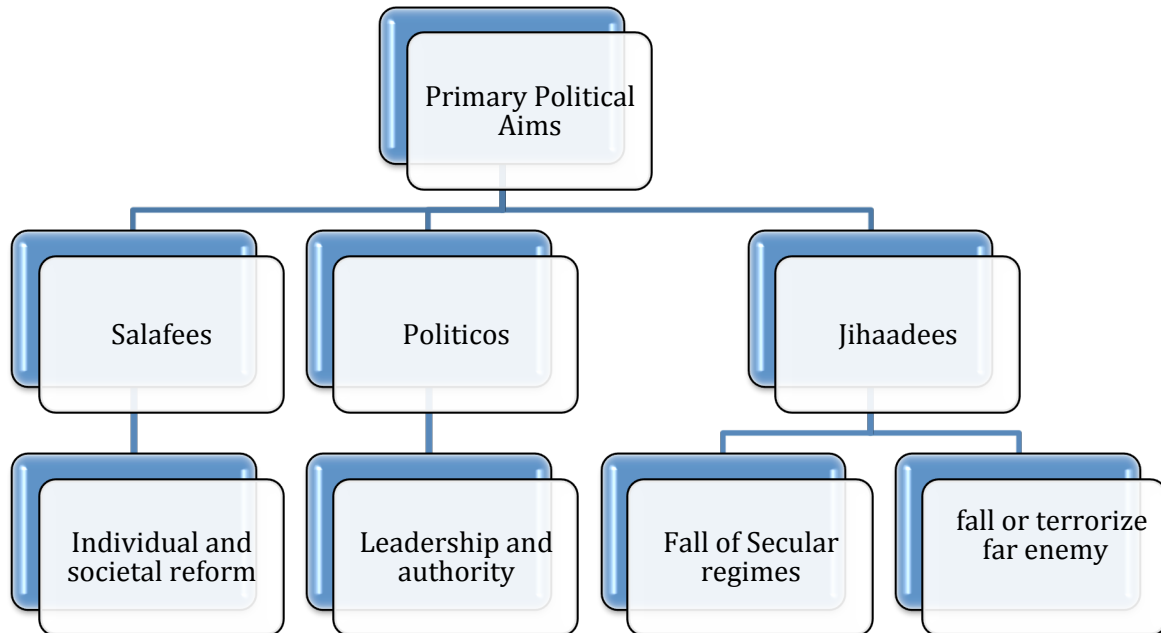
Salafism is a movement inspired by a religious and political metanarrative that demands militancy in the face of alleged Western hostility towards Islam. A militant Salafist is someone who considers their identity as a Muslim as paramount and holds that Muslims face hostility and aggression to which they have a duty to respond with violence” (2011:21). Egerton’s definition appears to encompass the belief of many, if not most Muslims, who feel that their Muslim identity is central to who they are, and overwhelmingly believe that there are both internal and external actors hostile towards Islam. This broad categorization begs the need for more precise scholarship and classification, so as not to render both hostile and friendly elements as equal rendering the classification useless and too broad.

Jihaadees generally argue that *Salafee* scholars hide the truth and are pawns of the regime; whereas politicians say they are ignorant of contemporary events (Green 2009). Wiktorowicz contends the difference between *Salafees* and *takfeerees* does not lie in conditions of *takfeer* or creed but rather application of when and who to declare a non-believer from amongst the Muslim leaders (2005). Evidence suggests a sharp rise in *jihadism* and there are a multitude of theories that purport to give rise to this ideology. Some of the common theories for the rise in *jihaadism* and its threat to the West in the twentieth century according to Turner’s assessment are:

1. there is an inherent clash of civilizations; culture and opposing world view
2. the rise of globalism and displacement of peoples, cultures, resulting in disenfranchisement
3. cultural value conflict and opposition to liberalism and democracy
4. the Palestinian cause and quest for statehood
5. U.S policy and support for authoritarian regimes
6. inherent clash between nation-state and the concept of a transnational Muslim identity under a caliph (2014).

While many of these factors have relevance in the phenomenon of the rise in violent Muslim extremism they do not account for ideology and inherent schisms in the Muslim community, or detail accurately the relationship between *Salafism* and violent *jihaadists*.

Diagram 1: Aims and goals of various movements



The above diagram illustrates the varied aims and socio-political goals of each of the above movements. *Salafees* generally concentrate their efforts on individual reform, which according to their theory will lead to greater societal reform. The *da'wa* movement of the *politicos* is more concentrated upon issues of leadership and the various means of attaining an authoritative role in a given society. Their methodology may include both electoral politics and usurping leadership through revolutionary means.⁴³ The third movement category may combine the tactic of rebellion; however, in contemporary times appears to be more focused upon joining conflict zones for the purpose of sowing discord to aid in the fall of existing apostate regimes or simply to terrorize the enemy. The following chapters will illustrate in depth ISIS's political project of establishing a caliphate.

⁴³ The *Salafee* position regarding rebellion stems from the evidences of the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and the methodology of the *Salaf*. Although some *Taabi'een* and other classicists rebelled against tyrannical leadership, this was more the exception than the rule and prior to the codification of abstaining from revolt against a despot. Some of the classicists like, Imaam al-Muzanee, Imaam Ahmad, al-Taabaree, ibn 'Abd al-Barr, and Imaam Nawawee declared consensus regarding this issue (al-Dhafaereee 2009:1/283).

Chart 1: Methodological differences

Group	<i>Jihaad</i>
<i>Salafee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offensive holy war requiring leader, parents' permission, capability of victory• Defensive holy war• Seeking religious knowledge• Self-reformation• Refuting <i>Ahl al-Bid'a</i>
<i>Takfeeree</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perpetual armed conflict• Ends justify the means: suicide bombs, soft targets, and civilian casualties• Lone wolf attacks

The above chart shows the general methodological tactics the various groups employ to achieve their aims. It also illustrates that *Salafees* are not predisposed to violence which is contrary to the aims of their *da'wa*.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter set out to define *Salafism* as a movement, discussed its origins, and what it means to be a *Salafee* from the perspective of *Salafee* scholars. In addition, the main components of the *Salafee* creed, concept of *manhaj*, and the *Salafee* critique of *taqleed* were explored. These tenets of *Salafism* were analyzed to contrast them with violent *takfeeree* conceptualizations of Islam and their interpretive discourse.

The next chapter will survey *Salafee* scholars' view of religious extremism, and their role in denouncing extremist ideology, with a focus on their censure of contemporary violent groups.

CHAPTER TWO: *Salafees* View on Religious Extremism

In this chapter the concept of religious extremism will be analyzed from the *Salafee* perspective and the role of *Salafee* scholars in denouncing extremism will be scrutinized with the aim of measuring their effectiveness in influencing Muslim youth to condemn extremism. Special attention will be given to the ideology of contemporary groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, contrasting them with the *Salafee manhaj* and the view of contemporary *Salafee* scholars. This will be measured through analyzing key texts, speeches, and *fatwa* from *Salafee* scholars and by examining blogs, and websites, that contain western *Salafee* discourse.

Extremism According to *Salafee* Scholars

Terms like extremism and terrorism are both general and ambiguous making it difficult to pin point universally accepted definitions; however, with that in mind this chapter will introduce some commonly held definitions contrasting them with the *Salafee* perspective.

The term *rahaba* or extreme fear is mentioned in the Qur'an as a term, which at times refers to worshipping Allah in a state of humility and fear of disobeying His commands. In other verses the Qur'an alludes to causing fear or 'terrorizing' non-Muslim combatants. Allah says, "And make ready against them (spread fear *tarhabun*) all you can of power, including steeds of war to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy..." (Qur'an 8:60). *Imaam* al-Baghawee comments that fear should be spread amongst the enemies of Islam to deter future combatants from attacking Muslims (1987:2/259). *Salafee* scholars mention that through preparation and the display of military strength the objective of spreading fear and terrorizing the enemy is achieved without contradicting the Islamic principles of safeguarding civilian lives, prohibition of burning by fire, and preserving places of worship. All the above categories are protected according to prophetic tradition. Ibn 'Umar, a companion said, "During one of the battles a dead woman was found, so Allah's

Messenger (saw) forbade the killing of women and children” (al-Bukhari 1996:4/301).

In contrast, groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS interpret the above verses to carry out wanton violence against anyone they perceive as their enemies by literally terrorizing them through indiscriminate violence. This is best illustrated by their numerous descriptions of suicide attacks. In one such incident the bomber attacked a group of *Shi’a* during their religious festival, ISIS reported by saying, “Our *istishhadi* brother Abu Fahd al-‘Iraqi entered into the midst of a group of Rafidi *mushrikin* [*sic*] during one of their *shirki* [*sic*] processions in the city of Sha’b towards the northeast of Baghdad and detonated his explosive vest on them. The blessed operation resulted in approximately 100 *murtaddin* being killed and wounded” (Rumiya 2016:3/42).⁴⁴ For ISIS the *Shi’a* are pagans who should be exterminated as a religious duty and they do not discern between combatants and non-combatants. They even go as far as labeling these attacks as martyrdom operations rather than suicide missions. Apart from the *jihadist* themselves, there are few who consider these actions as praiseworthy or necessary; however, the perception of violent actions and what is considered a legitimate form of resistance is subjective. For example, ISIS publications often portray suicide missions in a positive way. They extoll the ‘merits and virtues’ of such operations and scrutinize those who question their legitimacy. *Salafees* are particularly repulsed by these actions as they are both extreme and un-Islamic: distorting principles of *jihad* and a setback to *da’wa*. Although these acts are a distortion and violation of Islamic *jihad*, the general perception of most observers is that *jihad* is synonymous with terrorism, which reinforces the negative stereotyping of a pure Islamic concept. Hoffman states:

On one point, at least, everyone agrees: terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one’s enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and

⁴⁴ *Istishhadi* [*sic*] refers to a person who participates in a suicide mission or what they refer to as martyrdom operation. The term *murtaddin* refers to a group of people who have been excommunicated from Islam and the *takfeerees* frequently use this term to describe their opposition.

would otherwise prefer to ignore (1998:31).

Defining Terrorism

“Generally speaking, terrorism involves the use, or threat of use, of violence as a means of attempting to achieve some social or political effect” (Horgan 2014:10). Similarly, *Salafees* also view violence and the threat of violence as being a part of terrorism, but they view actions legislated by the *sharee’a* ordinances to be outside of its scope. Still another definition of terrorism is “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (GTI 2016). However, the database used by the Global Terrorism Index excludes state terrorism instead focusing on non-state actors and groups.

Terrorism, according to Dr. ‘Abdullah al-Mutlaq is an act of aggression or threat of violence by an individual, group, or state seeking to spread fear by using one of the various means of violence to accomplish an unlegislated (non-compliant with *sharee’a*)⁴⁵ end” (2010:131). This definition excludes legislated *jihaad*, which is carried out under the leadership of a Muslim state or leader for the benefit of, or defense, of the Muslim community. Likewise, although Horgan’s definition is broad it does not include (nor does he imply) what is commonly considered “just war theory” by Western academics. Examples of “just war” might be the violence commissioned by legitimate state actors against other states or actors that threaten their sovereignty or territory. Hoffman best articulates the distinction between more traditional warfare and terrorism when he states, “Even in war there are rules and accepted norms of behavior that prohibit the use of certain types of weapons...and proscribe various tactics and outlaw attacks on specific categories of targets” (cited in Horgan 2016:19). Groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS, and al-Shabaab do not operate in accordance with international law, and many argue, they flout Islamic law and

⁴⁵*Sharee’a* can be defined as a system of law derived from the Qur’an and *Sunna* which governs everyday life, providing the basis for law, governing both public and private affairs. Ibn Taimeeya states, *sharee’a* is “that which Allah has legislated from creed and actions” (1996: 3/256).

norms as will be observed.⁴⁶ *Shaikh* Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhaab al-‘Aqeel goes to great length to distance Islam from the actions of *takfeeree* groups by saying:

Terrorism is the terror that is caused by those groups or individuals who resort to killing and wreaking havoc and destruction. Terrorism is therefore, according to the contemporary compilers of modern Arabic dictionaries, killing akin to the riotous killing that is mentioned within the texts of *Shar’eeah* [sic]. As the Prophet (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) mentioned with regards to the signs of the end of time, the spread of ‘*al-Harj*’ (riotous killing). The meaning of ‘*al-Harj*’ is killing and the increase in spilling blood, which is all from the signs of the end of time. To the extent that the one killing will not know why he is killing and the one that was killed will not know why he/she was killed. Islaam is free from this riotous killing, free from this terrorism and free from this kind of corruption. Terrorism is established upon destruction of properties such as factories, farms, places of worship, train stations, airports and the likes; Islaam is clearly free from such actions that are based upon corruption and not upon rectification (salafimanhaj.com).

Recognizing terrorists before they commit acts of violence is a nearly impossible task and countless articles, books, and publications have been dedicated to trying to do so with very limited success. However, there does appear to be common characteristics of groups that resort to terrorism. “Most terrorist movements are relatively small, (semi-) clandestine collectives built on anti-establishment sociopolitical or religious ideologies. They seek to overthrow or at least destabilize a target regime, or influence it (be it a domestic or foreign-based power) by using violence or the threat thereof to exert pressure” (Horgan 2016:11).⁴⁷ As per Horgan’s definition, *Salafees* do not fit the criterion as a group with a specific ideology oriented towards rebellion or revolutionary politics, in fact, it can be asserted that *Salafees* are not perpetrators of terrorist acts or espousers of violence,

⁴⁶ While there is a rising amount of evidence of human rights abuses by the Saudi regime from the war in Yemen to the killing of the journalist Jamal Kashoggi, these actions of the regime are in no way reflective of *Salafism*. *Salafism*, as was mentioned previously, is an understanding of Islam and in no way does an organization, individual, or government’s behaviour reflect on the movement unless the action is authenticated by the Qur’an and *Sunna*. The Saudi government may promote *Salafism*; however, its actions and politics are not reflective of *Salafism*. *Salafees* emphasize that *Salafism* existed long before the Saudi regime deriving its roots to the movement of *Ahl Hadeeth*.

⁴⁷ ISIS with their claim of statehood as well as control of large swathes of territory do not fit perfectly in accordance with Horgan’s definition.

contrary to the many misnomers around *Salafism* perpetuated by media. This researcher has not come across any verifiable data suggesting a link between *Salafees* and violence. In contrast, there is a plethora of data linking violence and *takfeeree* movements whom *Salafees* are known to repudiate, while at the same time rejecting revolutionary theory (Green 2009). The *takfeeree-jihaadee* groups have become proficient in spreading terror globally, not always by effective attacks, but by simply instilling fear in their intended targets and keeping them on edge. Fear for these groups is more effective than committing violence.⁴⁸ Jenkins states, "The *jihaadists* clearly have discovered this and have recently modified their strategy to exploit these vulnerabilities. *Jihaadist* rhetoric now urges followers with limited capabilities to launch low-level attacks, even if they are likely to fail, confident that public and political reactions will still provide a good return on their investment" (Rand 2017:2). Simply classifying *Salafees*, who do not call for violence nor share a common ideology, *manhaj*, or concept of *jihaad*, with these groups does not make sense, nor is it useful academically, and unfortunately it is a common pitfall of Western academics. *Salafees* view extremism as actions, ideologies, statements, and methodologies that transgress *sharee'a* boundaries. This is important for understanding *Salafees* because they deem all affairs within the parameters of the *sharee'a* as acceptable.

ISIS on the Scale

ISIS and other al-Qaeda inspired factions, like other guerilla groups, break all standards of conventional warfare as a consistent practice. ISIS probably more so than al-Qaeda have engaged in both guerilla warfare tactics while trying to establish a state and defend territory, as well as terrorize their enemy. For ISIS the means justify the ends and they are not restrained by any external rules of engagement,

⁴⁸ The recent U.S ban on onboard electronic devices from several Muslim countries, the attempted ban on immigration from certain Muslim majority states, and heightened security measures globally are just some examples of how this fear of terrorists and terrorism, however justified, can have a direct impact on policy and achieve the goal of extremist groups: to instill fear.

which, coincidentally, they deem to be un-Islamic. According to the ISIS publication of *Rumiya*:

As the soldiers of the Khilafah [*sic*] continue waging war on the forces of kufr, we take a glimpse at a number of recent operations conducted by the mujahidin of the Islamic State that have succeeded in expanding the territory of the Khilafah, or terrorizing, massacring, and humiliating the enemies of Allah. These operations are merely a selection of the numerous operations that the Islamic State has conducted on various fronts across many regions over the course of the last few weeks (2017:1/22-23).

ISIS is very clear in its resolve to conquer, spread fear, and destroy any and all adversaries in order to achieve its stated goal of an Islamic state, and they believe in maintaining a perpetual state of warfare in order to make Islam dominant by any means. Their brutality and methods of terrorizing their opponents and the populace they govern show they are willing to use whatever means at their disposal to achieve their aims. In a recent Brookings Institute article Byman asserts:

The Islamic State evolved out of the civil wars in Iraq and Syria, and its tactics reflect this context. The Islamic State seeks to conquer; thus it deploys artillery, massed forces, and even tanks and MANPADS as it sweeps into new areas or defends existing holdings. Terrorism, in this context, is part of revolutionary war: it is used to undermine morale in the army and police, force a sectarian backlash, or otherwise create dynamics that help conquest on the ground (2016:3).

ISIS 's primary tactics and tools of influence are through terror and ruthlessness. According to the Global Terrorism Index, "ISIL-affiliated groups undertook attacks in 28 countries in 2015, up from 13 countries in 2014" (2016:2). ISIS does not restrict their attacks to any one battle front for them the whole world is a place of conflict between faith and disbelief. According to GTI "ISIL surpassed Boko Haram as the deadliest terrorist group in 2015. ISIL undertook attacks in 252 different cities in 2015 and was responsible for 6,141 deaths in the year" (2016:4). Many war crimes are attributed to ISIS fighters and their atrocities are well documented: from rape to beheadings and public crucifixions, and even burning their captives of war. Countless *Salafee* scholars have denounced these actions declaring them evil,

inhumane, and overall un-Islamic. *Shaikh* ‘Abdul Muhsin al-Abbaad referred to the leader of ISIS as a “*takfeeree* murderer” who declares *Sunnis* as apostates for working alongside the Iraqi government and law enforcement agencies. He further likened ISIS to the original *Khawaarij* sect (takfiris.com).

ISIL is the deadliest terrorist group in Iraq’s history with over 11,000 deaths. The next deadliest group in Iraq is al-Qa’ida [*sic*]. However, the number of deaths attributed to these groups is underestimated as nearly two thirds of the 50,000 deaths in Iraq from terrorism in the last 13 years have not been claimed by any group. Other groups active in Iraq include the al-Naqshabandiya Army, a Sufi group that has been active since 2006, and the Mukhtar Army, a Shi’a militia group (GTI 2016:5).

ISIS although openly hostile towards *Shi’a*, and anyone who opposes it, “should be given much credit for Iran’s rise in the region. An avowedly anti-*Shi’a* group, the Islamic State has inadvertently allowed Iran to accumulate more power in Iraq and Syria and gain closer ties to major international powers such as Russia” (Rand 2017:5). This shows ISIS’s lack of political astuteness or suggests it is not concerned truly with *Shi’a* hegemony, but only opportunity, instead of strict adherence to specific principles, especially *Salafee* ones. The rise of ISIS and its expansion can be partly attributed to its alleged enemies who purchased petrol, allowed them temporary refuge, and in the case of the Syrian regime, released many of their fighters to fight the Americans. “Iranian allies such as Iraqi Shi’a militias, the Syrian regime, and Lebanese Hezbollah have been key in fighting the Islamic State and other Sunni Jihadi [*sic*] groups. Of course, the Syrian regime and Hezbollah have spent much of their energies fighting the Syrian opposition and not the Islamic State, but Iran has been able to paint itself as a force against violent Sunni jihadism [*sic*]” (Rand 2017:7). Some *Salafees* suggest that this is evidence that Iran and ISIS are aligned with similar goals or at least complacent regarding *Shi’a* domination focusing much of their energy and brutality fighting against *Sunnis* and causing instability amongst Muslim regimes like the original *Khawaarij* sect did. However, this requires more in-depth analysis outside the scope of the study.

ISIS claims to adhere to Islamic values and uphold *sharee'a* law; however, it violates Islamic standards of *jihaad* as articulated in the Qur'an and *Sunna* and criterion of traditional *Sunni* jurists. Contrary to its claims of purity, ISIS attacks many civilians and spreads trepidation throughout the populations they inhabit. These are clear violations of the principles guiding Islamic *jihaad*. In 2015, "the majority of attacks targeted civilians, who account for 43 per cent of deaths. Over half of attacks on civilians were bombings or explosions, with the number of assassinations decreasing from the previous year" (GTI 2016:3). ISIS attempts to justify attacks against civilians and their places of worship by claiming they are legitimate targets because they are a part of a larger crusade against Islam and they are citizens of a coalition of nations who attack its caliphate like its predecessors in al-Qaeda. "In Lyon, a daring Muslim came to the defense of the Khilafah [*sic*] by storming a French factory and beheading a kafir [*sic*] belonging to France, a crusader coalition nation waging war against the Khilafah [*sic*]" (Dabiq 2015:10/3). While it may seem insignificant to many analyzing "the war on terror", ISIS views every attack as a propaganda victory and counterstrike against all those who oppose their vision of an Islamic state. These killings are repulsive to *Salafees* who deem these activities as setbacks to their *da'wa* efforts. *Dabiq*, the ISIS online publication, reports on the beach attack that took place "in Tunisa, the mujahid [*sic*] Abu Yahya al-Qayrawini made his way into a hotel beach resort...with an assault rifle and massacred dozens of citizens belonging to a number of European crusader states..." (2016:10/3). ISIS's brutality seems limitless with even more ruthless attacks than al-Qaeda, and although its strategies are similar both groups are critical of each other. For ISIS, al-Qaeda is weak and negligent in its duties because they "have the ability to take and hold territory and impose their will. Yet they refuse to establish the rule of Allah..." (Dabiq 2015:10/3).⁴⁹ ISIS further characterizes its fighters as those who hope to attain the glory of the afterlife regardless of how their heinous acts are perceived in the media and by governments. In contrast, ISIS views al-Qaeda's fighters as being overly concerned, and restrained, by the

⁴⁹ This is also indicative of many of the *jihaadee* groups fighting in Syria: splintering and infighting based upon differing objectives and perceptions of *sharee'a* applicability.

perception of world opinion, which paralyzes it from *sharee'a* implementation. In their critique of Mulla Umar, the former Taliban leader of Afghanistan, ISIS states, "the man is not striving to establish general shari Khilafah [*sic*] whose supervision affects the whole world from its kafir [*sic*] and apostate governments" (Dabiq 2015:10/20). It further accuses him of nationalism and not having a broad vision and concern for the whole Muslim nation. In addition, ISIS did not deem his focus to be on removing disbelieving despots who rule over Muslim lands. This shows that ISIS views movements like al-Qaeda and Taliban as illegitimate *mujahideen* and the Muslim regimes as illegitimate apostate governments ruling over Muslim territories. Finally, ISIS saw Mulla Umar as an illegitimate leader for Muslims, and that al-Qaeda must pledge allegiance to ISIS's chosen leader.

Differences with *Salafee Manhaj*

There are many ways in which ISIS differs from the *Salafee* methodology; however, for the purpose of this research, the three most significant ways will be analyzed: its call to violence and brutality, its *jihad* tactics, and its excessive use of *takfeer*.⁵⁰

First, ISIS primarily directs its *da'wa* towards other Muslims by exhorting them to violence. Killing and terror, to ISIS, are divine mandates, which legitimizes attacking soft targets. ISIS's propaganda is far reaching, and it encourages and inspires attacks worldwide. It describes a recent knife attack in the U.S by saying, "A soldier of the Khilafah – our brother Dahir Adan – stabbed 10 kuffar [*sic*] in the state of Minnesota in response to the calls to target the citizens of the nations involved in the Crusader coalition" (Rumiya 2017:2/34). As part of ISIS'S propaganda, it exploits various lone-wolf attacks to show that its *da'wa* to violence is effective and heeded; however, it is not always clear if these attacks have a link to ISIS contrary to its claims. The *da'wa* of ISIS is a form of violent propaganda "similar to its predecessors the *Khawarij*. It is not known for *da'wa* to Allah. Instead it calls to its

⁵⁰ Also, part of the irony of ISIS's violence and brutal paradigm is that it shares a common narrative to the *Islamaphobes*: Islam is a violent and imposing religion (Beck 2015).

wicked *mathhab* and it never stands together with the *umma* to fight their enemies... instead it exerts its efforts to fight them, destroy the *da'wa* to Allah, thus causing people to hate Islam" (al-Rehailee 2017:80-81).

Although, ISIS claims to be defenders of *Sunni* Islam and defenders of the faith many of its attacks have been against *Sunnis*. According to a proclamation by one of their scholars Muharub al-Juburi who claims ISIS is the defender of *Sunni* blood and honor then he states, "We will confront, by the power of Allah, any aggression against it with the severest and most vexing of responses, the brutality which has no limits" (Rumiya 2017:2/35). Al-Juburi claims his group is the defender of *Sunnis*; however, evidence suggests that many casualties of ISIS's violence are in fact *Sunnis* in Iraq and Syria although exact statistics are difficult to substantiate (GTI 2016:7).

Another way in which the *Salafee da'wa* differs from the violence filled rhetoric of ISIS can be illustrated through their Friday sermons. Most *Salafee* sermons deal with personal reform and removing sinfulness from society with most preaching being unusually apolitical. This also varies to a certain degree depending upon the society in which the *Salafees* reside. Due to both strict government control and support for the *da'wa* in Saudi Arabia, *Salafee* scholars rarely if ever engage in political rhetoric unless it is favorable to the government. This is in part due to the adherence to the principle of obedience to the ruler and the prohibition of openly criticizing the leader and his policies. However, due to the more open nature of Yemeni society, prior to the recent civil war, it appears Yemeni *Salafee* scholars were more open in their advice and acknowledge the government's mistakes without contradicting the principle of encouraging rebellion or disobedience to the ruling authority. For example, *Shaikh* Muhammad al-Imaam, a well-known student of *Shaikh* Muqbil bin Haadee, is known for lecturing about more controversial topics like the role of international organizations in Yemen and Muslim societies in general as well as offering advice about coping with oppression from the government, and

advice for the ruling political party (olemalyemen.com 2017).

Second, ISIS as a movement developed in a conflict zone, Iraq, evolving from al-Qaeda, which bases its movement on its concept of *jihaad* and revolutionary struggle. Byman states regarding ISIS's tactics:

The Islamic State does not follow Al Qaeda's "far enemy" strategy, preferring instead the "near enemy" strategy, albeit on a regional level. As such, the primary target of the Islamic State has not been the United States, but rather "apostate" regimes in the Arab world—namely, the Asad regime in Syria and the Abadi regime in Iraq. Like his predecessors, Baghdadi favors purifying the Islamic community first by attacking Shi'a and other religious minorities as well as rival jihadist [*sic*] groups (Brookings 2016:6).

ISIS's focus before being put on the defensive by coalition forces, was primarily to obtain territory and destabilize the regimes in Iraq and Syria. *Salafee* scholars repudiated both goals because the incitement to revolution and violence against those regimes would likely lead to the scenarios in which those states live today: chaos, wanton violence and fear affecting the Muslim residents of those countries.

ISIS's understanding of *jihaad* conflicts with traditional concepts because anyone anywhere can participate by just committing acts of violence against civilians. One of the ideologues that writes for ISIS states that a Muslim "barred from hijrah must purify him- self of the branches of lesser hypocrisy that hold him back from performing jihād [*sic*] in his location. Let him record his will, renew his bay'ah [*sic*], carry the Khilāfah [*sic*] banner, and strike the crusaders and their pagan and apostate allies wherever he can find them, even if he is alone" (Dabiq 2015:12/4). ISIS puts great emphasis on conquest, vengeance and literal bleeding of its enemies, and they attempt to justify their brutality through Islamic texts. For *Jihaadists*, it is possible for anyone to join their concept of *jihaad* if it is carried out for the betterment of their perceived goals and to terrorize their enemies. This departs from traditional juristic rulings and the *Salafee* concept of *jihaad*. Wagemakers observes, "It is possible for any organization, group or individual convinced of its method, its goals, and its way to join it, directly or indirectly"

(2012:80). These principles have no *Salaf* (legitimate Islamic predecessor) nor can it be associated with *Salafism* due to its deviation from core Islamic principles. For example, *Salafees* believe that *jihad* must be under a Muslim leader, whether he is righteous or oppressive and that *jihad* is a collective struggle, not an individual one, against those non-Muslim nations that do not have a pact or treatise with the Muslims. Furthermore, *Salafee* scholars, unlike ISIS, do not deem it impermissible to have affection and relations with non-Muslims. *Shaikh* Bazmool explains that affection for non-Muslims is of two main types: one that expels a person from Islam and the other type, which does not. In the former category it can further be divided into the five juristic rulings. In short, loving a non-Muslim for their religion or creed, or assisting them in disbelief nullifies a person's Islam (2015). This highlights a methodological difference between *Salafees'* understanding of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* and *takfeerees*.

ISIS uses a plethora of dictates from classical scholars to justify its brutality without any effort to contextualize the verses and *hadeeth* they quote or the verdicts it appropriates to validate its violent methodology. In fact, in some of the statements it issues there are flagrant transgressions of *sharee'a* principles that safeguard human life, as well as arbitrary accusations of *takfeer* and declarations of apostasy, which it issues against any Muslim, that dares criticize or disagree with its interpretations of *sharee'a* or grand scheme of attaining a universal leader through violence and trepidation. This methodology of wreaking havoc and committing violent atrocities against civilians is a phenomena alien to Islam except to the extent that the original *Khawarij* sect carried out outrages against fellow Muslims. *Jihaadee* groups like ISIS revive this trend and methodology (Green 2009). "One of these great principles is that all people must be fought until they accept Islam or come under a shar'i [sic] covenant. This principle establishes the prohibition of shedding Muslim and covenant-bound kafir blood as well as the permissibility of shedding the blood of all other kuffar [sic]." (Rumiya 2017:2/17). A significant part of ISIS's *da'wa* is to encourage lone wolf attacks, especially for those who are unable to join the main battlefield.

Muslims currently living in Daar al-Kufr must be reminded that the blood of the disbelievers is halal, and killing them is a form of worship to Allah, the Lord, King, and God of mankind. This includes the businessman riding to work in a taxicab, the young adults (post-pubescent “children”) engaged in sports activities in the park, and the old man waiting in line to buy a sandwich. Indeed, even the blood of the kaffir [sic] street vendor selling flowers to those passing by is halal to shed and striking terror into the hearts of all disbelievers is a Muslim’s duty (Rumiya 2017:2/17).

The vivid imagery and violent use of language is what inspires often marginalized and disenfranchised youth to become inspired to participate in ISIS’s version of *jihad*, with promises of paradise, righting injustices, and being apart of the struggle to restore the lost glory of the Muslim community. For those individuals who cannot migrate to the only ‘true Islamic state’ then their role is advancing the cause through violence and individual lone wolf attacks, thus fulfilling their duty to achieve the collective goal of spreading terror and fear amongst their enemies. ISIS’s rhetoric legitimizes the targeting of all opposition, and for them, as well as their *jihadist* predecessors, these are *sharee’a* objectives.

Jihadist [sic] discourse is full of polemical, dichotomist, Manichean, incriminating agonistic, warmongering, and resentment-laden words. Jihad [sic] is waged against the Shiites [sic] quietist Muslims, the West, and all Muslim rulers. The fight against the disbelievers and the “fake Muslims” obsesses jihadist discourse. Those who are called hypocrites (*munafiq*) are only Muslims by name; their major crime is to disagree with jihadists on the necessity of holy war. Their obsession makes the jihadist [sic] version of Islam almost entirely devoted to violence and its justification (Khosrokhavar 2009:73).

This violent polemic argumentation differs with *Salafee* discourse, which never reaches the level of violence or *takfeer*. Discourse between *Salafee* groups is sanctioned by *sharee’a*, and if differences persist, usually they result in excommunication from the *manhaj* not the religion. For example, in a file entitled “Collection of Shaikh Rabee’a’s Refutations of al-Hadaadeeya” taken from the Shaikh’s official website, there are over 63 different articles refuting opponents, whom according to the Shaikh, contain errors in *manhaj* by holding extremist views regarding criticizing individuals and declaring them to be heretics. Although some of the criticisms contain hyperbolic and polemic language, nevertheless he does not

issue a ruling of *takfeer* against his opponents, but rather excommunicates them from the *Salafee manhaj* (rabee.net 2017).⁵¹ This highlights *Salafees'* caution in issuing rulings of *takfeer* even against their detractors and those whom they censure. In a *hadeeth*, it was mentioned that a man was fearful of being resurrected and punished due to his many sins so, he ordered his children to burn his body and distribute the ashes in the sea after his death. (Muslim 1999) *Shaikh* Sulimaan al-Rehailee comments about this *hadeeth*, stating "whoever denies the ability of Allah to resurrect him then this is disbelief by consensus of the Muslims" (2017:107). He then explains that although the man made a statement of disbelief he was forgiven due to ignorance of the ability of Allah and his severe fear and humility, which was evidence of his faith. Ibn Taimeeya states, "The person who is capable of making *ijtihaad*, while striving to follow the Messenger (saw), is more deserving of forgiveness than the person who misinterprets" (1996 3/231).⁵² The purpose of mentioning these statements is to illustrate the difference between *takfeeree* methodology and interpretation of core texts, and the principles of *Salafees*, who exercise caution in the issue of *takfeer*, avoiding verdicts of violence, and restraint regarding *jihad*.

Salafees emphasize the need to rectify the greater Muslim community and the societies in which they live by exhorting them to monotheism and shunning sinfulness. To illustrate this point when analyzing one hundred *fataawa* from a collection of verdicts from Bin Baz, taken exclusively from the chapter of *jihad*, only six percent of the verdicts were directly related to conducting warfare with the remaining ninety four percent pertinent to *da'wa*, commanding righteousness and rebuking sin in the society. (Bin Baz 2010:18). This shows that even for the highest and most respected religious authority amongst *Salafees*, the discussion and

⁵¹ Scholars from the time of the *Salaf* until present day scholars classified *bid'a* and heresy, into those infractions that are considered disbelief and those which do not nullify faith, but instead are sinful (al-Rehailee 2001). The term excommunication used above does not refer to disbelief or *takfeer*, but rather sinful, unorthodox infractions, which expel an individual or group from *Salafism*: meaning they are unorthodox Muslims.

⁵² A further point to be noted is that both *takfeeree* groups and *Salafees* quote extensively from Ibn Taimeeya, but *takfeerees* rarely highlight those intricate details and conditions for *takfeer* discussed by Ibn Taimeeya.

verdicts pertaining to *jihaad* and fighting were of less importance than *da'wa*. *Da'wa* and learning Islamic knowledge, for *Salafees*, are considered types of *jihaad* and both contain high merits. *Shaikh* al-Fawzaan was asked about whether *jihaad* of the sword or striving to seek knowledge takes precedence. He replied, "The *jihaad* of knowledge takes priority. It is an absolute necessity that a person studies that which allows him to correctly practice his religion...so his *jihaad* is based upon knowledge and insight and not ignorance and mistakes" (al-Fawzaan 2004:44). It can also be inferred from this text as well as the numerous treatises on *da'wa* and *jihaad*, that fighting is not prioritized in the *Salafee* community, unless the conditions are met according to *Salafee* scholars, unlike the *jihaadee* groups who make that their primacy. "If the conditions for *jihaad* are not met, nor does one possess ability to fight, then wait until the Muslims regain their strength and are established and prepared, then they fight" (al-Fawzaan 2004:48).

The third distinction between ISIS's *manhaj* and that of the *Salafee da'wa* is the implementation of the principle of *takfeer*. *Takfeeree* ideology is an integral part of ISIS's *manhaj* because it delegitimizes their Muslim opponents and deflects scholarly criticism of their brutal tactics. ISIS abuses the principles of *takfeer* casting a broad net encapsulating all opposition to its ideology, which is an attempt to delegitimize its Muslim critics. In an article discussing the various Syrian opposition factions it states, "If those holding supposedly good intentions were truthful they would abandon the Sahwah alliance, repent from their apostasy pronounce takfir [sic] upon their former allies and wage war against them, not the Islamic State" (Dabiq 2015:12/17). ISIS excommunicates all opposition, makes penitence a condition to join it, and requires judging its former allies with *takfeer* in order to establish legitimacy. It also requires its former opposition to reinstatement their Islam. In addition, they use the same tactics to deflect scholarly criticism. ISIS criticizes *Salafee* scholars and those who condemn it by questioning their authenticity by querying, "Or have they just become – with their own approval – mere sticks in the hands of the tawaghit used to strike the mujahidin [sic], all in the

name of the Shari'ah [sic] and the religion? These people are no more than “*Imaams*” of misguidance and “scholars” of taghut [sic]” (Rumiya 2017:1/30). In fact, ISIS considers those scholars to be like Orientalists who are lauded by the West as experts, but considered by Muslim scholars as ignorant, ill informed, and dubious.

Yet Muslims today are discouraged by the so-called “Salafi” [sic] or even “Salafi Jihadi” [sic] claimants from approaching the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* [sic] without blinding goggles limiting them to the desires of contemporary “scholars” from amongst those supporting the tawāghīt [sic] or those sitting back amongst their women in the shades of the tawāghīt [sic]” (Dabiq 2015:11/10).

Much of the enmity between *Salafees* and *takfeeree* groups is due to varying interpretations of core Islamic texts, understanding, methodology, and even issues of creed, with *takfeer* being one of the many issues they differ over. Long before the rise of ISIS, *Salafee* scholars like bin ‘Uthaimeen rebuked their dogma and the *hizbee* groups that disseminated the *takfeeree* ideology. A large part of their *da’wa* is oriented towards excommunicating individual Muslims from the faith through nefariously capricious rulings. In fact, it appears by the numbers of declarations of apostasy it issues in its online publications that it places the burden of *takfeer* upon the general Muslims, whereas *Salafees* reserve those rulings for the scholars. Bin ‘Uthaimeen explains that the *Salafee manhaj* consists of principles and conditions, which do not allow for easy judgments of apostasy. He states, “The origin of a person who is an adherent of Islam is that he remains in that original state until something proves that it is no longer the case based upon *sharee’a* evidence” (2002:137-138). There is a noticeable difference between how ISIS views Muslim communities that do not accept its *manhaj*, and the *Salafee* methodology, which attempts to analyze individuals according to *sharee’a* principles, not paranoia and *hizbeeya*. Furthermore, the implications of such *takfeeree* thinking, according to Bin ‘Uthaimeen is that it entails “discrediting Allah’s judgment, and mischaracterizing those whom have been presumed to be heretics (by excommunicating them from Islam unjustly)” (2002:137-138). Moreover, Bin ‘Uthaimeen declares that these judgments are usurping Allah’s right to judgment and similar to ruling by other than divine law because it involves excommunicating those individuals who Allah did not

anathematize. Therefore, it makes lawful that which is unlawful: the sanctity of the Muslim by wrongfully accusing him or her. Of interest, this judgment of the *Shaikh*'s illustrates how *Salafees* turn the claims of the *takfeerees* against them in their discourse, because a common theme of the *takfeerees* is that their antagonists do not rule by Allah's divine law or they have *al-wala'a* for disbelievers (Green 2009). To illustrate the difference between ISIS and *Salafee* scholars in Qur'anic exegesis is the verse in *Aali-Imran*, which prohibits taking disbelievers as supporters. *Salafee* scholars interpret the phrase 'taking supporters' as meaning to love disbelievers with one's heart, which is an intrinsic value, therefore negating faith. The other concept of love, according to *Salafees*, entails openly declaring love to protect oneself from the harm of disbelievers who may threaten one's wealth or person. Thus, if faith remains in one's heart and he or she is at ease, then this is considered permissible and a form of defending against evil (al-Rehailee 2017). *Imaam* al-Tabaree says "If the disbelievers are uppermost and they have power and strength, and a Muslim fears for himself, or the leader is fearful for the Muslims, then he can display gentle speech, open kindness, and compassion with his words" (2012:5/317). *Imaam* al-Tabaree also narrated on al-Sud'ee regarding the term protectors mentioned in several verses, "Then it is loving them for their religion" (2012:5/317). *Imaam* ibn Katheer and many other scholars of Qur'anic exegesis also concur with this meaning. *Shaikh* Sulimaan mentions, "If we agree with them for the sake of argument...it is important to note that all love in the heart for a disbeliever does not entail disbelief which nullifies faith. Instead, that which nullifies faith is love in the heart for the sake of religion. As for loving the disbeliever for a worldly benefit then this is sinfulness and not disbelief which expels one from Islam" (2017:205). Ibn Taimeeya comments, "It is possible a man could have love for them due to kinship or necessity and it can be a sin which reduces his faith in which case he does not become a disbeliever" (2006:7/522-523).

Additionally, there are numerous examples from the *Salaf*, which exemplify the *Salafee manhaj* in exercising restraint in issues of *takfeer*. One such example is the

labeling of the Qur'an as a created entity. The *Salaf* reached consensus on *takfeer* of the one who claims the Qur'an was created and not the speech of Allah. Although this was the case, *Imaam Ahmad bin Hanbal* "did not make *takfeer* of specific individuals (regarding this controversy), even the leader who ordered people to say the Qur'an was created and punished people over this issue" (al-Rehailee 2017:112).

Overall, the tactic used by ISIS, and in fact all the *hizbee* groups surveyed for this research, is one in which they declare all opposition as having betrayed Islam, lost legitimacy as Muslims, thus deeming them worthy of death for opposing the "true Islamic state", which is in stark contrast to the *Salafee* methodology. It seems ISIS has lost sight of *sharee'a* objectives. According to ISIS, *sharee'a* is a series of punishments, which enable it to subjugate those under its authority and wage war against its enemies, which includes *Salafee* scholars.

Scholars of ISIS

ISIS expresses vehement hatred towards *Salafee* scholars viewing them as hypocrites at best and enemies of Islam at worst. When analyzing ISIS's rhetoric and their criticisms of *Salafees* they describe the *Salafee* scholars as learned men who hide the truth and do not act upon their knowledge.⁵³ They also assert they issue religious verdicts defending apostate regimes, legitimizing their rule, and attacking the true 'defenders of the faith': ISIS. "Therefore, Ibn Baz, Ibn 'Uthaymin, al-Fawzan, Al ash- Shaykh (the contemporaries), Muhammad Hassan, al-Huwayni, Husayn Ya'qub, al-Qardawi, al-Buti, an-Nabulusi, al-Ghiryani, al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatadah, al-Haddushi, and al-Fahl are not scholars" (Rumiya 2017:1/30). ISIS issues verbal attacks upon a wide range of scholars from major well-known *Salafee*

⁵³ Abul Mughira a commander for ISIS in Libya was asked about their campaign in Libya to secure territory and he mentioned some opposition they had from *Salafee* fighters there by saying, "There was also resistance from some of the Madkhalī Murji'ah [sic], who carried arms against the Islamic State." (*Dabiq* 2015:11/62). This illustrates the enmity *Salafees* and groups like ISIS have for one another.

scholars to supporters of *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*, and even other *takfeeree* ideologues, in addition to known *Sufi* clerics due to their opposition to their methodology. ISIS claims that these scholars do not practice the knowledge they possess and are tools of the various regimes they represent that are being used to criticize the legitimate caliph of the Muslims and his vanguards. “Where is their acting upon knowledge?! Where is their open declaration of the truth?! Where is their rejection of the shirk of the tawaghit [sic]?! Where is their fighting, combat, and ribat [sic]?!⁵⁴ Where is their clarifying the truth and guiding the people?! Where is their confronting of the disbelievers’ violent campaigns against the Muslims?!” (Rumiya 2017:1/30). ISIS is at odds with *Salafees* and their methodology and they are both extremely critical of one another, both accusing the other of *hizbeeya*, and contrary to what many pundits claim, it appears inaccurate to classify them together with their divergent paradigms regarding issues they both deem fundamental to the faith. In *Dabiq*, they critique *Salafee* scholars in particular by saying they “abandoned jihād [sic] in an era where jihād is fard ‘ayn [sic]. They ask the Muslims to follow those “scholars” who are silent about the evils of rulers who are tawāghīt [sic] not merely tyrannical... who call to deviance and apostasy and who side with the crusaders and apostates against the Muslims” (2015:11/13).

In contrast, ISIS has their own scholars; however, to *Salafees* they are considered young ignorant heretics who are not known for Islamic knowledge, instead they consider them to be youthful zealots and ex-proponents of al-Qaeda. According to Ether Abdul Haq and the website Zaman al-Wasal, captured ISIS documents reveal that youth between ages of 18 to 30 form the majority of ISIS recruits and fighters offering “vitality by investing their energies and enthusiasm. The ‘simple minded’ form the majority of those joining ISIS’s ranks... Based on the documents, no persons above the age of 60 have joined ISIS” (2017). This report suggests most ISIS members, as well as many of the *jihadee* groups, are very young and have

⁵⁴ The term *tawaghit* is used to describe anyone or anything worshipped other than Allah (false Gods) and this is a specific reference to those who rule or legislate man made laws. *Ribat* refers to war and combat.

had limited Islamic training. Moreover, most of their scholars are unknown in *Salafee* circles, being considered youthful and inexperienced with few exceptions, and even those they herald as being scholars, according to *Salafees*, have dubious credentials. *Shaikh* Muhammad Taahiree claims that many of the *takfeeree* youth are ignorant and duplicitous and they reject *Salafee* scholars especially in issues of *manhaj*, *jihaad*, and *takfeer*. He states, “What is so preposterous is if you ask one of them about an issue of purification or transactions or something else, he will not answer according to his understanding or intellectual endorsement, rather he will research from the statements of the scholars and make *fatwa* according to their statements” (2009:507). Most of the individuals ISIS praises as scholars in their online publications are unknown. ISIS only acknowledges those ‘scholars’ who are apart of their so-called *jihaad* and in agreement with their fundamental principles. According to ISIS, authentic scholars are “those by whom Allah revived both knowledge and creed, those who went public with the truth and by whom the truth became manifest. They were those who joined knowledge with *jihaad*, like Shaykh Abu Mus’ab az-Zarqawi, Shaykh Abu Anas ash-Shami, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ar-Rashud, Shaykh Abul-Hasan al-Filistini, and Shaykh Maysarah al-Gharib” (Rumiya 2017:1/30).

ISIS is a *jihaadee* organization first and foremost and accepts recruits who are willing to embrace their ideology and methods. This means that many are uneducated in any traditional Islamic education and easily indoctrinated. According to Ether Abdul Haq, “Amongst the new recruits only 4.5% have traditional Islamic academic training” (2017:1). However, other data provided by GTI suggests, “ISIL foreign fighters who have gone to Syria generally have higher levels of education but low incomes with many fighters joining in part due to a feeling of exclusion in their home countries” (2016:6). While there may be a variety of motives for individuals, who have different educational backgrounds to join *jihaadee* groups, much of the data suggests the typical recruit has limited Islamic educational background, which makes them easily susceptible to ISIS’s methods.

ISIS's Methodological Contradictions

ISIS transgresses methodological guidelines that violate *Salafees'* code of ethics. *Salafee* scholars lash out against any critics and suggestions of similarities to the *takfeeree-jihaadee* groups. *Shaikh* 'Abd al-Salaam al-Suhaimee states:

What is so outlandish is that there are those who declare the *hizbee* groups *Salafee-jihaadee*. How can they be *Salafee* and they differ with them in creed and *manhaj*? How can they be proponents of *jihaad*? When the correct *sharee'a* meaning of *jihaad* is nonexistent in the traits of those groups due to the absence of the fulfillment of conditions for correct *jihaad* in those factions, when the reality is in the substance and meanings not in claims and characterizations" (2005:7).

Shaikh Bazmool describes the methodology of *Ahl al-Sunna* regarding textual interpretive discourse and how it differs with various *hizbee* groups like ISIS by mentioning that using texts as evidence involves four stages. The first stage requires an analysis of the evidence to determine its authenticity. Second, looking to see if the interpretation is sound in accordance with the *Salaf*. Third, analysis into whether the text in question has been abrogated by other authentic texts. Fourth, analysis into whether the text in question contradicts other authentic texts and their interpretations (2015). *Shaikh* Bazmool suggests that *takfeeree* groups simply adhere to literalism and do not refer ambiguous texts, which they use to declare *takfeer* and substantiate terror, to the clear texts that offer the most sound and comprehensible meanings. For example, many Qur'anic verses clearly urge mercy and justice and that one of Allah's divine characteristics is mercy. However, *takfeerees* tend only to emphasize punishments, fighting and enmity while deemphasizing mercy, treaties and pacts with non-Muslims. This is further demonstrated by their methodological differences with *Salafees* and their excessive use of *takfeer*. They deem all opposition to their *manhaj* as being apostates from Islam and it appears that they find it easy to substantiate their general rulings of *takfeer* and violence by misuse of *sharee'a* evidences, decontextualizing core texts, and misconstruing their meanings.

For Muslims, the duty of the believer is to worship Allah through the various means that are dictated by the *sharee'a*, conversely for ISIS the most legitimate means for doing so is through brutality, shock, and terror, at the same time they attempt to frame their tactics and discourse by decontextualizing the Qur'an to legitimize their methodology.

But Allah did not only command the "fighting" of disbelievers, as if to say He only wants us to conduct frontline operations against them. Rather, He has also ordered that they be slain wherever they may be on or off the battlefield. He said, "So when the sacred have passed, then kill the mushrikin [*sic*] wherever you find them and take them, surround them, and wait for them at every outpost" (At-Tawbah 5). All of this becomes all the more apparent for those who have realized that the blood of a kafir is cheap, filthy, and permissible to shed (Rumiya 2016:1/12).

For ISIS the concept of martyrdom supersedes everything: they use suicide bombings, trucks as weapons against civilians and knifings as a part of their broad array of weaponry. The publication *Dabiq* describes in detail how to perform knife attacks, choosing the proper concealable weapon, and effective choosing of soft targets. In addition, it details how to weaponize vehicles and maximize casualties (2015:3/15). A brief perusal of ISIS's online publications shows they devote a high percentage of their articles to describing martyrdom operations and battlefronts with short articles dedicated to acts of worship like prayer and fasting, which is a radical aberration from the *Salafee manhaj*. In a video entitled "*We Will Surely Guide Them to Our Ways*" it depicts the suicide operations of several Western fighters of ISIS from Canada and the UK. The Canadian declares after entering his explosive laden armored vehicle, "There is no Islam without *jihaad*" (2017). For ISIS, *jihaad* is the core of Islam, so fighting is deemed both a means and objective. Weimann, after his analysis of terrorist website content concludes: "Terrorist rhetoric on the Internet tries to present a mix of images and arguments in which the terrorists appear as victims forced to turn to violence to achieve their just goals in the face of a brutal, merciless enemy devoid of moral restraints" (2008:82). ISIS's rhetoric is used to dehumanize their opponents to make it easier to enact violence against them.

ISIS and *Salafee* Sources

When classifying ISIS, many pundits tend to categorize them as a *Salafee-jihaadee* group due to their usage of core classical texts to substantiate their methodology. This presents a quandary for *Salafees* as they attempt to distance themselves from *jihaadee* groups. The propaganda used by ISIS to recruit is quite effective and many of the classical source texts used by them are the same texts used by *Salafees* and traditionalists; however, they decontextualize the meanings to justify their violence. The narrative ISIS presents to their target audience is that they are defenders of the faith and aim to restore the lost prestige of the greater Muslim community by restoring its leadership based upon the *manhaj* of the Prophet (saw). For both the unlearned and those with an Islamic academic background the arguments they put forth backed with classical *fatwa* and interpretations of concepts like *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* can be persuasive, especially for those who have a more literal orientation towards textual analysis. This presents a problem for *Salafees* who reach a radically different conclusion based upon those same texts. Essentially *Salafees* and *takfeeree* groups are propagating a different message to the same potential target audience.

Tactical Goals of al-Qaeda

Bin Laden founded al-Qaeda, one of the most notorious *takfeeree-jihaadee* organizations to arise in the 1980's initially recruiting fighters and sponsoring them to fight in the Afghan *jihaad*. Al-Qaeda evolved over the years and expanded their goals to terrorize the West and their Muslim allies. Al-Qaeda has lost much of their prestige amongst *jihaadees* primarily due to the killing of some of their top leaders and the rise of ISIS; however, they remain a critical threat. Some have highlighted that al-Qaeda's strategy is very broad based on a multitude of fronts with the primary aim of destabilizing instead of gaining territory unlike groups like ISIS

(Wagemakers 2012). Al-Qaeda, being the predecessor to ISIS, do not differ in creed or *manhaj* from ISIS except in that the latter claim to take a more purist approach, denying any elements of *hizbeeya* and making great efforts, according to their claims, to distance themselves from *takfeeree* ideology (al-'Adnani 2014). Some academics like Byman discern between tactics of al-Qaeda and ISIS, when he observes:

Although the ultimate goal of Al Qaeda is to overthrow the corrupt "apostate" regimes in the Middle East and replace them with "true" Islamic governments, Al Qaeda's primary enemy is the United States, which it sees as the root cause of the Middle East's problems. By targeting the United States, Al Qaeda believes it will eventually induce the United States to end support for these Muslim state regimes and withdraw from the region altogether, thus leaving the regimes vulnerable to attack from within. Al Qaeda considers Shi'a Muslims to be apostates but sees their killing to be too extreme, a waste of resources, and detrimental to the broader jihadist [*sic*] project (Brookings 2016).

Salafee sources this researcher has encountered do not concern themselves with the details or minute differences in methodology or tactics between these two groups, but rather their concern is primarily analyzing creed and *manhaj* and the deviance of *takfeeree* groups from orthodoxy. *Salafee* scholars generally view ISIS as simply a derivative of al-Qaeda and their ideology. *Shaikh* Sulimaan al-Rehailee states, "From here we understand the difference between al-Qaeda and *Daesh* organization (ISIS), they have one ideology, *takfeeree* ideology; however, they differ in two distinct ways" (2017:50). The *Shaikh* then mentioned their differences were regarding leadership and tactics.

Jihaadee groups like al-Qaeda believe in interaction with non-Muslim communities by two means: *da'wa* to convert to Islam or coercion and subversion. Some researchers allege that *Salafees* whom they refer to as fundamentalists share *jihadist* goals like al-Qaeda except for the use of violence. "Fundamentalists agree with this message but reject the use of violence to achieve it, whereas jihadists [*sic*] believe that violence should be the major means to fulfill the aim of universal Islam" (Khosrokhavar 2009:74). As the *jihadist* groups, especially ISIS, strive for and essentially believe they have established a caliphate, *Salafees* do not reject having

a universal *Imaam* to rule over Muslims; however, they have a completely different methodology for doing so that requires personal and societal reform. For *Salafees* the goal is to attain this reform of the community that in turn will lead to universal righteous leadership.

Another common precept shared by *jihadee* groups like al-Qaeda and *Salafees* is the concept of *hijra* (migration); however, they differ in implementation. Groups like al-Qaeda, similar to their predecessors the *Khawaarij*, believe that *hijra* is absolutely imperative to maintain Islamic legitimacy: a Muslim must migrate from a non-Muslim land to a Muslim land. In the case of ISIS, all lands are illegitimate and make up the land of war; therefore, the only valid *hijra* is to their self-declared Islamic state. During the height of al-Qaeda, migration was considered mandatory to the Afghan state under the Taliban. Although the precept of *hijra* is shared by *Salafees*, they do not consider a Muslim to be a disbeliever if they remain in non-Muslim lands. Some *Salafee* scholars, like their classical predecessors, believe it is highly recommended to immigrate to Muslim lands where one can practice their Islamic rites more easily and safely without compromising their Islamic morals and identity. Still some *Salafee* scholars claim it is conditional to propagate the faith if one possesses knowledge and is a strong practitioner of the faith (Wanees 2017). The concept of *hijra* is one example illustrating *takfeerees'* misappropriation of classical *Salafee* texts. For example, ISIS substantiates their version of *hijra* by using religious verdicts of Ibn Hazm and *Imaam* Tahaawee. Ibn Hazm states, "If he moves there [the lands of the crusaders and pagans] for the sake of what he might acquire from dunyā [sic] but lives there like a dhimmī [sic] – despite being able to join the body of the Muslims, then his deed is not far from kufr and we find no excuse for him" (1996:8/138). ISIS appropriates this *fatwa* to rebuke all those who leave Muslim lands in general, even during conflict, famine, and turmoil, to migrate to non-Muslim lands. However, like al-Qaeda, they hold that the only legitimate land to migrate to is their self-declared state, even singling out states like Saudi Arabia as abodes of war (Dabiq 2015:11/23). Another example is the ruling issued by Al-Hasan Ibn Hayy (died 169AH) who said, "If a man moves to dārul-harb [sic] without

apostatizing from Islam, he is a murtadd [sic] for abandoning Dārul-Islām [sic]" (cited in Dabiq 2015:11/23). This classical *fatwa* is cited to substantiate *takfeer* of those who migrate to non-Muslim lands (any lands outside their control), thus allowing them to be targeted as apostates because they do not consider them to be Muslim with the rest of their adversaries. In an article extolling righteous deeds ISIS exhorts their supporters to join them or at least contribute by spreading terror and violence throughout the world and this they deem as righteous *jihad*.

As for the Muslim who is unable to perform hijrah from dārul-kufr [sic] to The Khilāfah, then there is much opportunity for him to strike out against the kāfir [sic] enemies of the Islamic State. There are more than seventy crusader nations, tāghūt [sic] regimes, apostate armies, Rāfidī [sic] militias, and sahwah [sic] factions for him to choose from. Their interests are located all over the world. He should not hesitate in striking them wherever he can. In addition to killing crusader citizens anywhere on the earth, what, for example, prevents him from targeting Rāfidī [sic] communities in Dearborn (Michigan), Los Angeles, and New York City? Or targeting Panamanian diplomatic missions in Jakarta, Doha, and Dubai? Or targeting Japanese diplomatic missions in Bosnia, Malaysia, and Indonesia? Or targeting Saudi diplomats in Tirana (Albania), Sarajevo (Bosnia), and Pristina (Kosovo)? Or executing major Sahwah sponsors in Qatar, Kuwait, and "Saudi" Arabia? (Dabiq 2015:11/54).

Another tactic used by al-Qaeda that differs with the *Salafee* methodology and has been denounced in *Salafee* literature is Suicide missions in general and the use of women as fighters specifically. Al-Qaeda is known for their brutality and even though they claim to adhere to Islamic principles they use women fighters for suicide missions. This is a trait that distinguishes al-Qaeda from ISIS who generally relegate women's role to rearing children, policing females in areas they control, and online recruitment for '*jihad*ee brides'. Until now there is no evidence to suggest using female fighters will become common place amongst ISIS; however recent documents do allude to serving the Islamic nation with their blood sacrifice if ordered to by the caliph. The principle Islamic edict is that women can assist in the battlefield as nurses and supporting the male fighters. One of the wives of the Prophet (saw) said, "We consider *jihad* the best deed. Should we not fight in Allah's cause?" The Prophet (saw) responded, "The best *jihad* (for women) is an

accepted pilgrimage” (al-Bukhari 2009:4/307). Thus, in effect, the *jihadee* groups like al-Qaeda, their affiliate al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram have distorted an Islamic concept: *jihad* by making it synonymous with terror and using women as suicide bombers. Thus, depicting a fundamental Islamic concept in a negative or derogatory way. This is one of the predominant reasons most of the world associates *jihad* with acts of terror and terrorism. Furthermore, *Salafee* scholars reject the concept of suicide missions and indiscriminate bombings used by the *jihadee* organizations. They argue “it is well-known in the *sharee’a* that good intentions alone are not sufficient to say something is a permissible action. Those individuals claim the means to something takes the same ruling as its intended result. Therefore, (they understand) if their result is permissible, then their means is permissible” (Suhaimi 2015:138). This critique further serves to highlight just how divergent *jihadees* and *Salafees* are in their interpretive discourse and conclusions. For *Jihadees*, the ends justify the means, whereas for *Salafees* the opposite is true. Suhaimi affirms, “The end does not always justify the means, instead the means must be permissible to make the end permissible” (2015:138). Those groups that practice suicide operations accept that suicide is impermissible in Islam; however, they argue that it is a means to a just end, which is effective in warfare by causing mass destructions and disheartening their enemies. Furthermore, they attempt to justify their actions by describing them as martyrdom operations instead of suicide missions; however, the reality of their actions is not disguised by the change in terminology, and *Salafees* absolutely reject these operations (Green 2009).

Al-Qaeda, like ISIS and other *takfeere* groups, differ with the *Salafee manhaj* by their excessive use of *takfeer*. Another common theme and tactic of al-Qaeda is to use *takfeer* to delegitimize their Muslim opposition and undermine their authority that legitimizes, for *jihadees*, the use of violence to destabilize those societies. According to al-Suri, a leading al-Qaeda ideologue, all regimes are apostate so *dhimis* under them are lawful to kill and pacts between 'apostate regimes' and non-Muslim states are nullified. In addition, all regimes have violated Islamic law, and

anyone can wage global *jihad* against them (Wagemakers 2012). According to the al-Qaeda manifesto entitled “Goals”, they state, “we believe that anyone who performs a statement, or an action of unbelief is an unbeliever because of this (statement or act) even if he did not intend unbelief by this” (jihadology.net 2017). This statement violates important principles and statements of *Ahl al-Sunna* that make up both contemporary *Salafees’ manhaj* and that of classical scholars regarding *takfeer*. Al-Albaanee states, “Whoever has the evidence presented and clarified for him (regarding an issue of disbelief), then rejects that evidence has become a disbeliever” (5/558). A central difference between *Salafees* and *takfeerees* is *Salafees* emphasize that one cannot be accused of apostasy in general without having evidences presented to him and his rejection of those evidences, except in the case where the action which necessitates expulsion from the religion due to it being common knowledge that it is a nullifier of the faith (Green 2009). Ibn Hazm states, “That no one is declared a disbeliever until the command of the Prophet (saw) has reached him. Then if he rejects it he is a disbeliever” (2005:3/302). Ibn al-‘Arabee states, “The person who is ignorant or makes a mistake from this nation, even if it is an action of disbelief or polytheism is not considered a polytheist or disbeliever, because he is excused for being ignorant or from having made a mistake (regarding the action of disbelief)” (cited in al-Rehailee 2008:8). Bin ‘Uthaimeen states, “Therefore, a statement or action could be considered disbelief or wickedness, however the person who uttered it or did the action may not be a disbeliever or wicked” (2005:92).

Another statement which illustrates their fervency for issuing edicts of *takfeer* is, “We believe that he who accomplishes an aspect of worship, such as an act of disobedience, love, fear, beseeching, seeking aid, invocation, asking for succor, involving other than God, such a person is incontestably an infidel whose act of unbelief is the greatest way of falling outside the Muslim community” (jihadology.net 2017). When analyzing the statements of *takfeeree* groups it seems that excommunicating ‘the other’ is not only of utmost importance, but it seems it is a pillar of their creed that allows them to distinguish between allies aligned with the

same *manhaj*, and foes which they view as legitimate targets of violence. Al-Qaeda declares, “We believe that the ruler who does not rule in accordance with God’s revelation, as well as his supporters, who substitute the sharia’, [sic] are infidel apostates. Armed and violent rebellion against them is an individual duty on every Muslim” (*jihadology.net* 2017). In this case according to al-Qaeda the ruler’s authority is nullified, which necessitates rebellion, thus the ruler and any of his allies are now legitimate targets of violence. *Shaikh* Sulimaan al-Rehailee dispels the myth, propagated by many *takfeeree* groups, regarding ruling by other than divine law by stating, “Every law which is not in the Qur’an and *Sunna* is not considered ruling by other than divine law. Instead, ruling by other than Allah’s legislation entails ruling by what opposes Allah’s *sharee’a*” (2017:221). The *Shaikh* also mentions that the verses referring to Allah’s law are not restricted to governments and that ruling by other than divine law is not always a sin, which nullifies a person’s Islam. He states:

We have analyzed from the statements of the *Salaf* from the time of the companions to contemporary times and we have found that most of the statements of the *Salaf* entail exactly these details: ruling by other than divine law is not always disbelief. We found that some of them make the rulings general; however, what is understood from their statements is there are details not mentioned. Ibn ‘Abbas states that it is the lesser disbelief...we have found more than fifty *Imaams* and scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa’a* mentioning these exact details (2017:225).

***Salafee* Role in Online Anti-Terror Propaganda**

Generally, *Salafee* scholars and preachers deal with extremism and acts of terror through propaganda and proselyting because they are not in positions of political authority apart from Saudi Arabia and individuals in various governments throughout the Muslim world. Therefore, the speeches and verdicts of select well-known *Salafee* scholars in some of the Muslim states who have global reach will be analyzed, as well as an analysis of Saudi efforts in combatting extremism will be critiqued.

Scholars in the Arab world predominately engage extremist ideology through, lectures, seminars, *fatwaa*, and in the case of Jordanian scholars, through direct debate (al-Albaanee 2010). On the other hand, *Salafee* students and organizations in the Western world tend to have a more aggressive campaign against extremists dedicating whole websites, conferences, and even direct engagement through debates with *jihadee-takfeeree* ideologues, this is probably due to the fact that *Salafee* organizations in the West tend to have only grassroots support and lack government funding, and are faced with the challenge of living in a non-Muslim society where their identity is challenged and allegiance is questioned. For example, the website takfiris.com which is an affiliate site of salafipublications.com, 1995-2017, one of the most popular *Salafee* websites in the Western world, had approximately fifty articles on the topic of *takfeer*, refuting the various extremist ideologues and their dogma. Although many of their articles present an alternative to the *takfeeree* paradigm, at times the language contained in some of the articles tends to be hyperbolic often-targeting individuals instead of addressing their contention with *takfeeree* discourse. For example, in a six-part series entitled “*The Takfiri Retard Series*” “they used terms like “retard” and “Takfiri, Kharijite, [sic] Pretenders” to describe and undermine their antagonist. These terms do not serve to strengthen their arguments or disprove the ideas espoused by their *takfeeree* antagonists. Madeenah.com another popular *Salafee* website contains approximately eight articles on terrorism in contemporary times. Another contemporary *Salafee* website known for disseminating anti-*takfeeree* discourse is salafimanhaj.com. The website contains over 11 articles and booklets dedicated to countering extremist ideology and ideologues with in-depth articles ranging from analysis of the origins of Boko Haram to articles criticizing ISIS.

Statements Denouncing Extremism

To many policy pundits the association between *Salafism*, *jihadism* and terror is accepted without analyzing the statements and works of *Salafee* scholars and their role in denouncing extremism. Some of the leading *Salafee* scholars in places like

Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Yemen have been very active in combatting *takfeeree-jihaadee* ideals and ideologues. For example, *Shaikh* 'AbdulMaalik ar-Ramadanee, an Algerian *Salafee* scholar residing in Saudi Arabia, stated about the Algerian *takfeeree* group known as the '*Salafee Group for Da'wah [sic] and Combat*':

How can, with all of this, making permissible the blood of the police and killing them, be clean (i.e. permitted)? Then they live on stolen monies which have been ransacked from people by force! They also destroy the souls of the Muslim soldiers...As a result, we do not however absolve ourselves from '*Salafism*' as it is the truth, yet we absolve ourselves for Allaah from the '*Salafist Group for Dawah[sic] and Combat*' and from all those who grasp weapons today in our country against the system or the people. I say this so that the creation knows that the ascription of those revolutionary groups (i.e. the GSPC) to *Salafism* is a distortion of *Salafism*, just as how ascribing deviant Muslims to Islam is also a distortion of Islam, blocking the true path of Allaah and causing people to flee from the victorious ones (*firqat un-Naajiyah*). However, *Salafism* is *Salafism*, just as *Islaam* is *Islaam*, even though it is distorted by the deviants (salafimanhaj.com 2017).

The statement of the *Shaikh* highlights several important differences between *Salafee* positions and *takfeeree-jihaadee* ideology. First, *Salafees* do not support rebellion and killing of authorities even if they are oppressive or deceptive in their policies. Second, *Salafees* reject any actions that call for usurping the wealth of the general population or causing harm to civilians and this is in accordance with Islamic law. Third, this statement further shows the efforts at which *Salafee* scholars distance themselves and the *manhaj* from revolutionary groups and the malevolent violence they commit.

A common trait of *Salafees* is their disdain for revolution and restraint regarding participation in violent conflict. *Salafee* scholars claim to be strict in adherence to principles espoused by classical jurists and often cite the principle of observing the harm and benefits of participating in contemporary conflicts. This is best illustrated by the limited amount of conflicts in contemporary times which they deem as legitimate Islamic *jihad* (Green 2009). The *jihadists* commit atrocities and attack civilian targets claiming that these actions are a part of legitimate *jihad*; however,

Salafees repudiate these claims. *Shaikh* 'Alee al-Halabee said regarding a terrorist attack upon a hotel in Amman, Jordan:

Without any fear of Allaah, and with no shame for the servants of Allaah, Those ignorant ones who get in the way and issue rulings, spoke with great ignorance regarding matters related to the spilling of blood and then turned their corrupted speech towards something worse and caused killing, calamities, tribulations and ordeals for the Ummah, all in the name of *jihad* and in the name of spreading the deen and commanding the good and forbidding the evil (salafimanhaj.com 2017).

Shaikh 'Alee's statement emphasizes that *jihadist*, according to *Salafees*, prevent the true Islamic *da'wa*, give false verdicts, legitimize terror and violence, all under the guise of *jihad*. What is of interest is that these claims are what the *jihadists* claim about *Salafees*: they hinder true Islamic *da'wa* (*jihad*) decree false verdicts on behalf of apostate despots, and distort the principles of the real *jihad*.⁵⁵ *Shaikh* Ramadaanee states regarding Abu Qataada "he viewed his country as being a disbelieving country and thus fled to the land of Britain and its rule and governance, taking from its wealth. He created methodologies, which are alien to human societies not to mention Islaam. He was the first to allow multiple bombings and he gave a *fatwaa* that was very strange in Islaam, clear in its savagery and outside the realm of humanity" (salafimanhaj.com 2017). This stinging critique of Abu Qataada is indicative of the *Salafee* position towards *takfeerees*. Also, contained in this critique is the accusation of hypocrisy: *takfeerees* do not live up to their own stringent principles; many of the heads of those *hizbee* groups have migrated from Muslim countries to reside in relevant comfort in the West, their alleged arch enemy (Green 2009). Another point that can be observed is that the *Shaikh* distances the *Salafee manhaj* from that of Abu Qataada even implying it as heretical and savage. Finally, the *Shaikh* disparaged Abu Qataada's *fatwa* for legitimizing the killing of women and children and road banditry (salafimanhaj.com 2017). *Shaikh* Sulimaan al-Rehailee states, "It is well-known that the *Sunna* came with mercy and justice. It

⁵⁵ *Salafees* often refer to *jihadists* as *takfeerees* or *Khawaarij* due to excessive usage of the principles of *takfeer* and their extremist views. On the other hand, *jihadists* claim *Salafees* are *Murji'* by not observing real faith, according to their perception, by refusing to excommunicate apostate leaders and rebel against them.

also came with *jihad* in the cause of Allah. This *jihad* in the cause of Allah was legislated for a reason, and has conditions, also the Prophet (saw) did not come to fight every disbeliever” (2017:237). The countless statements in *jihadee* videos, literature and publications show the tremendous differences in *fatwa*, methodology, and in fact creed between the *jihadee-takfeere* ideologues and that of the *Salafes*. The *takfeere* creed holds that *jihad* in and of itself is a goal and that disbelievers must submit or be subdued by all means. *Shaikh* Sulimaan al-Rehailee states, “The scholars of jurisprudence differ over the origin of the relations between Muslims and disbelievers...the most correct view of the scholars and those who analyze these issues from amongst them is that the origin is peace and *jihad* is legislated for particular situations” (2017:237). *Shaikh* ‘Abdul Muhsin al-‘Ubaikaan was also asked after the horrific London bombings if it was allowed for Muslims to inform the police if they are aware of such terrorist plots and replied:

Yes (he can). We say this is considered forbidding an evil. We already know that Islaam has judged this type of act to be impermissible, and the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wassallam) said: “Whoever amongst you sees an evil then let him change it with his hand. If he is unable then let him change it with his tongue (i.e. by speaking out against the evil). If he is unable to do this, then let him hate it with his heart and that is the lowest level of eemaan.” This act (i.e. terrorism) is evil, it is a crime and it is forbidden. Therefore, it is obligatory upon the one who can change an evil in the way he is capable of, and one of the ways is to inform on those criminals (salafimanhaj.com 2017).

This shows that *Salafee* scholars allow informing on deviant groups even in non-Muslim societies and in conjunction with non-Muslim authorities to prevent the harm that these groups pose to society and the spread of their aberrant ideology. This cooperation with non-Muslim authorities is viewed as a means of combatting distorted, deviant, methodologies. However, cooperation in this context is not without criticism from other groups in the greater Islamic community, as was the case with the Brixton Mosque in the UK (Lambert 2013). In addition, this highlights a point of great contention between the *takfeere* groups and *Salafee* scholars who issue *fatwa* that encourage cooperation with non-Muslim authorities for mutual benefit. The *takfeerees* see *fatwa* like these as pure treachery, hypocrisy, and open

disbelief. Thus, oftentimes those who issue or follow these verdicts are threatened with violence. Anyone suspected of treachery or that they condemn as a spy is excommunicated and killed. ISIS and al-Qaeda have a multitude of propaganda videos of their fighters executing alleged spies and traitors. In one such video taken in Syria alleged spies admit their guilt and apostasy, then ISIS fighters file out of their vehicles and shoot them in the head multiple times while they are blindfolded at point blank range. This according to the lead fighter shown in the video is a warning to spies and traitors (*Harvest of Spies* #3 2015).

For al-Qaeda one of the greatest violations of *tawheed* and *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* is to cooperate with non-Muslims against fellow Muslims or assisting them militarily in any form. "We believe that he who supports the associationists (mushrikun) [sic] against the Muslims, in whatever form this support takes, such a person is incontestably guilty of the gravest form of unbelief" (*jihadology.net* 2017). In contrast, *Salafee* scholars allow cooperation with non-Muslim states even in conflict if the situation necessitates. Bin Baz states "The Lord All-Mighty clarified for us in His Book that He made it permissible for His believing servants to do that which is prohibited if they are forced. Allah says, "We have explained for you what is prohibited for you except that which you were forced to do" (Qur'an 6:119) ...The point is that the country in this situation has been forced to seek assistance from some disbelieving countries against the oppressive tyrant because he poses a serious threat" (Bin Baz 2000:6/147). This was the general premise behind the issuing of the *fatwa* allowing American forces to enter Saudi Arabia to defend it against Iraqi forces under Saddam Hussein. This *fatwa* has been accepted and defended by most *Salafees* as a necessary evil; however, it was not without great controversy and many *takfeerees* rebuked the *Salafee* scholars and declared *takfeer* of the Saudi regime for allowing non-Muslim troops in the Holy lands.

Salafee scholars attribute the rise in *takfeeree-jihaadee* ideology in the contemporary context to thinkers like Syed Qutb and Mawdoodi and their

revolutionary inspired theology (Green 2009). Shaykh Muhammad al-Madkhalee states:

Those who set off the explosions in the Kingdom admitted with their own mouths, that they were affected by the Jamaa'atut-Takfeer (one of the Egyptian Qutbist groups) and that they were from the group of Osama Bin Laden and al-Masari, and they were spreading their literature. Osama Bin Laden - who taught this man? Who educated him about the Shariah (Islamic laws)? He is a businessman; this is his field of specialization...they admitted, as we said, with their own mouths, we saw it and read it in the newspapers, and I have it here with me recorded with their own voices, that they were affected by some of the people of takfeer (from the Qutbist groups) of Afghanistan (salafimanhaj.com 2017).

Salafees and many academics around the world concur that there is a strong link between the ideas of Syed Qutb and Mawdoodi and many *takfeeree-jihaadee* groups as well as politico Islamists. While *Salafees* take exception to being associated to those groups many academics argue otherwise. Meijer asserts:

Salafism's political dimension adopts three forms: quietist and discreet (with behind the scenes advice to rulers), covert (professing quietism, but acting politically while condemning open political involvement as *hizbiyya* [sic], leading to *fitna* or factionalism) and openly activist by calling for political reform. When Salafist groups openly propagate politics, they shade off into the Islamism (political Islam) of the Muslim Brotherhood, as is the case with the Saudi *Sahwa* movement...(2013:17).

There appears to be a strong correlation between the various trends of political activism whether they opt to take a more violent path like ISIS, or a more political solution such as the *Sahwa* movement. The commonality shared by these divergent trends is the influence of thinkers like Qutb. Haykel postulates:

A number of activist *Salafi* as well as *jihadi-Salafi* groups-the *Sahwis* and *Sururis* [sic] mentioned above as well as al-Qaeda- have been influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's organisational teachings and political concepts, especially those of Sayyid Qutb. Here the two most important ideas are Qutb's *hakimiyya* [sic] (God's sovereignty, which he adopted from the writings of the Indo-Pakistani intellectual Abu al-A'la Mawdudi (d 1979) and *jahiliyya* [sic] (idolatrous condition). These *Salafis*, for instance, have added a new creedal principle to their theology, that of *tawhid al-hakimiyya* (the oneness of

God's sovereignty, which is often subsumed under *tawhid al-Uluhiyya*) [sic] (Meijer 2013:50).

These are some of the fundamental characteristics that unite *jihadists* and politicians and Haykel's statement reveals why they are castigated by *Salafees* and how divergent their ideologies are from the *Salafee Manhaj*. These passages also underscore how both *Salafees* and academics view these variant trends and believe they share common origins. However, whereas academics view these groups to be trends within *Salafism*, *Salafees* take exception to this claim. Unfortunately, many critics of *Salafism* show their ignorance of the methodology and statements and texts of its adherents Silber states, "To this day, no major Muslim cleric or religious body has ever issued a fatwa condemning Osama bin Laden" (salafimanhaj.com). However, the above statement of al-Madkhalee disproves that claim and there are countless other denouncements of Bin Laden made by *Salafee* scholars and clerics. A constant criticism of Bin Laden, as well as many of the '*jihadist* scholars', by *Salafees* is that they lack scholarly credentials and many of them are young zealots affected by extremist thinking and limited scholarly training, and the result is that they evolve into *takfeeree* propagandists.

Speaking about the radicalization of Muslim youth during the Afghan *jihad* Muhammad al-Madkhalee states, "The majority of our youth that returned from the *jihad* in Afghanistan to our country were affected, either by the ideology of the *Ikhwaan* (the group *al-Ikhwaan al-Muslimoon*) in general, or by the revolutionary, *takfeeree* ideology. So, they left us believing that we were Muslims, and they returned to us believing that we were disbelievers" (salafimanhaj.com 2017). *Shaikh* Muhammad observes that often the youth who answer the call to *jihad* come back indoctrinated by the *takfeeree manhaj* and this is often the intent of *jihadist* groups. This is so that their methodology is spread, and the struggle continues for global conquest. When these youth return to their respective countries they can continue fighting and advancing the cause and this is legitimized through *takfeer*: delegitimizing Muslim societies and governments thus making them targets of violence. *Shaikh* Muhammad comments:

So with that, they saw us as being disbelievers, the rulers, and the scholars, not to mention the common folk. They labelled the (Saudi) state apostate, and they rendered the major scholars as apostates. They admitted this with their own mouths. They declared the scholars to be disbelievers, and mentioned specifically the two Shaykhs, Shaykh Abdul-Aziz Bin Baaz and Shaykh Muhammad Bin al-'Uthaymin, may Allaah preserve them. They mentioned their connection with al-Masari and Osama Bin Laden. Did they get this from the scholars of *Salafeeyyah* [sic]? No! Rather they got it from the people of *takfeer* (salafimanhaj.com 2017).

Salafee scholars are persistent in distancing themselves from *takfeeree* ideologues and those who espouse violence. *Salafees* view the *manhaj* of extremist groups as the anti-thesis of *Salafism*. Al-Madkhalee's statement shows the general animosity *Salafee* scholars have for *takfeeree* ideology, their disavowal of *jihadee* groups, and disassociation from their *manhaj*. Also, he articulates the *Salafee* position regarding the Saudi regime: regardless of mistakes made by the rulers, Saudi Arabia is still revered as a Muslim state ruled by *sharee'a* edicts. "Attributing to Islam acts of individual or collective killings, bombings, destruction of properties and the terrorizing of peaceful people is unfair, because they are alien to the divine religion," said the *muftee* of Saudi Arabia, *Shaikh 'Abd al- 'Azeez* (salafimanhaj.com 2017). The *muftee* is Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority and his statement is held in high regard by *Salafees* the world over. *Salafee* lectures are filled with refutations against violent extremism. The *muftee* then went on to say, "Islam is a religion of reforms and righteousness. It envisages the progress of humanity and takes it from darkness to light. It also calls for respecting agreements and prohibits their violation" (salafimanhaj.com 2017). This statement from the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia, which is often criticized as being the source of Islamic terrorism and the spread of extremist ideology, highlights several important points. First, it highlights the efforts of the Saudi government in fighting extremist ideology since 9/11. This is significant because it is one of the only states that claim to adhere to *Salafism*. Second, that it must be acknowledged that some of the contemporary sources used by groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda are some of the same texts *Salafee* scholars refer to; however, the conclusions are entirely different on how they perceive interactions with non-Muslims. The statement of the *muftee*

best describes how *Salafees* view violent *takfeeree* interpretations of core Islamic texts when he said, “Causing corruption on earth is one of the biggest crimes in Islam” (salafimanhaj.com 2017). This statement is a reference to the harm and chaos that often results from *takfeeree* ideology for both individuals and communities. In addition, it is a reference to a Qur’anic verse in which Allah describes the hypocrites as claiming that they are a force of rectification when in fact they are incognizant of the harm and wickedness they spread throughout the earth. Allah says, “And if it is said to them do not spread wickedness throughout the earth. They say, ‘Verily, we are those who rectify.’ However, they are the wicked doers (spoiler) but they are unaware” (Qur’an 2:11). Third, the Saudis who were accused of perpetrating the 9/11 attacks have no known links to *Salafees* or *Salafee* scholars and, in fact, most of them were known for irreligious behavior with some being known as al-Qaeda affiliates (Hoffman and Reinares 2014). *Shaikh Saalih Aalee-Shaikh*, the head of the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, mentions non-Muslims are considered either as “a *dhimmi*; a *mu’aahid*; a *musta’mín* or a *harbee*. And the Prophet (saw) instructed to give each one their due rights. Rather, Allah commanded to give non-Muslims rights in His Book, if they are not at war (with Muslims) and do not manifest enmity (against the Muslims)” (salafimanhaj.com 2017).⁵⁶ To substantiate his statement, he used the verse in which Allah says, “Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly (Qur’an 60:8-9). *Salafees* interpret the above verse to mean that non-Muslims have different categories and rights and as long as there is no hostility directed towards Muslims than the applicable *sharee’a* edicts apply and govern these relationships. While *takfeerees* acknowledge these categories of non-Muslims they consider pacts with them nullified, due to their perceived illegitimacy of the Muslim authorities,

⁵⁶ *Dhimmi* refers to specific individuals living in Muslim lands, who were granted special status and safety in Islamic law in return for paying the capital tax. The *Mu’aahad* is a citizen of a foreign state with which the Islamic State has a treaty. The *Must’aman* is a citizen of a foreign state with which the Islamic state has no treaty; however, they are protected by the state and permitted to do activities allowed by the host Islamic state. *Harbee* refers to a person who belongs to a nation at war with the Islamic state.

which made pacts and treaties with them. Allah says, "Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion – (forbids) that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers" (Qur'an 60:8-9). *Imaam* Sa'di, a well-known *Salafee* scholar explains, "Allah does not prohibit you from righteousness and relations and spending in goodness, being just with pagans (*al-Mushrikeen*) from family and others, so long as they are not fighting against you and forcing you from your homes" (1998:1010). This elucidation differs drastically from the explanation and orientation of the *takfeeree* groups that tend to explain the Qur'an, especially verses articulating *jihaad*, in a way, which fits their violent narrative and political aspirations. Their tendency is not to even mention verses that convey mercy between communities. *Shaikh* Saalih Aalee *Shaikh* states, "The Prophet (saw) stated, "Whoever harms a dhimmi has harmed me," or as is stated in the hadeeth. (Also)...he said, "Whoever kills a mu'aahad will not smell the fragrance of Paradise, the smell of which can be smelt for the distance of forty years." Why? Because the Muslims honour their lives as they came with an agreement, they came with a trust and is not to be transgressed against ..." (salafimanhaj.com 2017). An argument often put forth by *Salafee* scholars is that *jihaadee* groups often do not rule by Islamic law and rules of engagement, as they do not respect covenants, which are sanctioned by divine texts such as those previously mentioned. This again illustrates the principle that the reality of something is in its substance not in its claim, therefore *takfeerees* claim to follow and exalt divine law but they flout it and transgress against those protected by it through bombings of churches, killing of priest and common folk protected in Muslim lands. *Shaikh* Abdul Salaam al-Suhaimee states:

What is really strange is that some of these partisan Islamic groups named themselves "*Salafee Jihaadees*", yet how can they be *Salafee* when they oppose its creed and *manhaj*? However, the reality is in the application (of *Salafism*) not in mere claims and terms. It is imperative to bring attention to this confusion and misguidance, which is present in the Islamic world today" (2005:4).

Salafees go to great lengths to clarify their beliefs and distance themselves from

takfeeree-jihaadee extremism and violence. *Shaikh* al-'Aqeel also states:

The Muslim scholars denounced the attacks on the world trade buildings in New York and made clear that those who committed the act were criminals and that they had nothing to do with Islaam and that they merely killed themselves, and whoever kills themselves intentionally will be in hellfire killing themselves, and Allaah's refuge is sought. Similarly, the Muslim scholars denounced the terrorist attacks committed by those who associate themselves with Islaam that took place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The scholars also denounced the terrorist attacks committed by those who associate themselves with Islaam that took place in Sharm ash-Sheikh in Egypt. The scholars also denounced the terrorist attacks that took place on the tube stations in London, they denounced this and made clear that Islaam [*sic*] has nothing to do with such actions and that Islaam is free of them. (salafimanhaj.com 2017).

In contrast, there are many academics who believe that the main distinction between *Salafism* and *jihaadism* is in how the creed and *manhaj* is implemented in contemporary politics. However, even if some aspects of creed overlap it does not necessitate similarities in *manhaj* which is a very important distinction. However, critics like Meijer claim:

The main difference with mainstream Salafism is that, Jihadi-Salafism is primarily concerned with analysis of reality (*waqi'*) and changing that reality. In contrast, to mainstream Salafism, whose creed (*'aqida*) is based on the basic principles of Wahhabism (*tawhid*, *shirk*, etc), and separating oneself from that reality and avoiding politics, Jihadi-Salafism concentrates on the analysis of political reality, devising strategies and practice for how to change it, and applying them (*tatbiq*) to different situations and circumstances. In return, also its *'aqida* is transformed into being fully geared to jihad (Meijer 2013:24).

Meijer suggests that *jihaadees'* primary concern is altering the political reality, which suggests there is a difference in creed and *manhaj*. Furthermore, highlighting the *Salafee* paradigm *Shaikh* Turkmani states, "As for what should occur in terms of political, economic and social change and advancement, this is a result of being upright upon the religion; it is not an objective which is intended in and of itself" (madeenah.com 2017). This is a powerful indictment of those who allege *Salafees* and *takfeeree-jihaadees* share a common *manhaj* or even worldview because this

statement illustrates the *Salafee* paradigm which emphasizes worship and personal reform, dissimilar to the more material view of *jihadees* who desire a state, or to usurp power. *Shaikh* Turkmani continues, “The obligation upon us is to strive to fulfill the obligation of the religion, and the result of this is: political, economic and social advancement” (madeenah.com 2017).

Statements Debunking ISIS

ISIS, although ideologically rigid, has shown that it is equally practical as an organization willing to do transactions with its enemies to profit and finance its state and so-called *jihad*.⁵⁷

In stark contrast to the *Salafee* paradigm, many *Jihadees* are heavily influenced by thinkers like Qutb and Mawdoodi,⁵⁸ and because of this influence their aims are an aberration from *Salafee* objectives and highly political (Green 2009). In addition, both political and historical factors influence the worldview of these groups and movements who at times may share common grievances, but the results of how to address those grievances are highly divergent. *Shaikh* Turkmani states about the evolution of the *jihadee* movement, “A new interpretation of Islaam [*sic*] emerged, its summary is: Islaam [*sic*] is a materialistic civil movement intending to change the political economic and social face of the world; and the acts of worship and religious legislations are not the primary purpose of Islaam, rather they are mere avenues and not the intended objective itself” (madeenah.com 2017). Here *Salafee* objectives and the *jihadee* worldview are contrasted by a *Salafee* scholar who claims it is not merely a matter of differing ends but also of means that separate *Salafism* from radical *jihadism*.

⁵⁷ The reason for analysis and placing emphasis upon ISIS is because it has shown to be one of the most capable fighting groups with large territorial holdings and the most uncompromising in ideology from this researcher’s perspective. ISIS and its far-reaching caliphate includes the ideology and *manhaj* of other groups included in this study.

⁵⁸ Qutb and Mawdoodi both preceded many of the contemporary *Takfeeree* groups like *Jamaat al-takfeer wa al-Hijra*, *al-Qaeda*, and ISIS, and many of the ideologues of those groups extensively quote from Qutb and Mawdoodi, especially their concepts of revolt, *takfeer*, and *jihad* (al-Suhaimee 2005).

Some researchers allege groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS have strong secularist ties from their administration system and even ties to Secular *Baathists* movements. Michael Flynn, former National Security Advisor of the Trump administration, states about Zarqawi the former head of al-Qaeda in Iraq that ' "there was no love lost between Saddam and the Iranians, and Zarqawi ⁵⁹was not an Iraqi instrument by any means, but both regimes helped him" (2016:100). Flynn suggests that ideology for the diverse radical groups and state sponsors of terrorist organizations is often subverted when confronting a mutual enemy. While it is difficult to substantiate Flynn's claim that the Iranian regime helped Zarqawi travel to fight in Iraq, there is a plethora of evidence, which suggests that the Syrian regime released *jihadees* from their prisons to fight in Iraq against American troops. Also, "most of ISIS's leadership cadre consist of former Baath party military and intelligence officers that held high-ranking positions during Saddam Hussein's regime..." (Clarke 2015:164).

ISIS, although lambasted by Muslims of various orientations and even criticized as being contra Islamic in many ways by many think tanks is still associated with *Salafism*. Here Flynn, who openly articulates hostility towards traditional Islam admits, "German and Soviets had a lot in common, and radical Muslims freely picked elements from each in the creation of a *jihadee* ideology and the structure of Islamist states, whether the Islamic Republic of Iran or the current Islamic State (2016:103). Groups like ISIS, who have long been condemned by *Salafees*, have been criticized for being extreme, deviant, and have been accused of appropriating and mixing foreign political ideologies with their vision of an Islamic state. Flynn also observes that after al-Qaeda as an organization sustained losses in Iraq and Afghanistan, "al-Qaeda leaders found haven in Iran. This meant that the world's preeminent Sunni terrorist organization had an operational base within the world's preeminent Shi'ite country" (2016:104). Aside from some of the contradictions inherent in actions of groups like ISIS, *Salafee* scholars focus their criticism on the brutality and mayhem resulting from their onslaught and accuse them of

establishing an illegitimate caliph, which is not recognized by Muslims. However, further exemplifying ISIS's allegedly deviant origin and dubious relationships is a recent statement by Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon who affirmed reports that ISIS mistakenly attacked Israel and apologized for the action. He states, "They appreciate our military superiority... so we absorbed a single isolated attack executed by ISIS elements on the Syrian border. As we understand, it was done by mistake and it was only once" (middleeastmonitor.com 2017).

Al-Fawzan described those groups and individuals who use suicide bombings in Saudi Arabia as being worse than the original *Khawaarij* because of their lack of concern for civilian casualties, mass killings, and bombings. These *jihaadee* groups laid the foundation for groups like ISIS who further developed their ideology and *manhaj*.

Efforts of the Saudi State

After the September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers the nature of counterterrorism fundamentally changed. In 2003, Saudi Arabia experienced a series of deadly attacks that forced Saudi Arabia to begin to deal with the increasingly violent *takfeeree* movements based in the kingdom. "Central to Saudi counterterrorism efforts has been the use of unconventional "soft" measures designed to combat the intellectual and ideological justifications for violent extremism. The primary objective of this strategy is to engage and combat an ideology that the Saudi government asserts is based on corrupted and deviant interpretations of Islam" (Carnegie Papers 2008:97/1). Because Saudi Arabia officially adheres to *Salafism* the approach they take towards religious extremism is one in which they engage the ideology of the extremists as they view deviant *takfeeree* *hizbeeya* as a main threat to their authority. "A central goal of the kingdom's efforts has been to solidify the legitimacy of the ruling order and to eliminate violent opposition to the state by reinforcing the traditional Saudi interpretation of Islam, which stresses obedience and loyalty to the state and its leadership"(Carnegie Papers 2008:97/3). As

previously mentioned, *Salafism* is in part built upon obedience to the Muslim authority, regardless of the ruler's piety, if they remain Muslim they are to be obeyed in acts of piety (Green 2009). Many critics of the Saudi state accuse the regime of abusing this authority to maintain legitimacy by labeling its domestic critics as terrorists or *takfeerees* who want to destabilize the state. However, *Salafees* are concerned less with the political motives of the state, but rather the religious legitimacy, justifications, and implications of its policies. In accordance with *Salafee* ideas, the Saudi state "views the struggle against violent extremism as a part of a "war of ideas" centered upon issues of legitimacy, authority, and what is permitted in Islam" (Carnegie Papers 2008:97/3-4). This framework for viewing extremism is exactly how *Salafee* clerics envision and frame the problem and expound upon it in their rhetoric. By focusing on *takfeeree* ideology and reforming its adherents "the state aspires to help misguided believers return to the correct understandings of Islam. This strategy melds nicely with the Saudi concept of da'wah [*sic*] (call to faith) as a government obligation" (Carnegie Papers 2008:97/4). The Saudi stratagem for countering extremism emphasizes reform and rehabilitation of terror suspects, which seems to be a major factor for its success and acceptance in the society. "The Saudi strategy aims to disrupt 'the ideological infrastructure that supports and nurtures political violence. As such, the Saudi campaign strives to prevent exposure to takfiri [*sic*] beliefs; to refute those ideas and encourage the rehabilitation of offenders; and to promote policies that prevent relapses" (Carnegie Papers 2008:97/4). The Saudi program integrates various agencies and the general society by encouraging participation and cooperation with the authorities all under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. This shows a commitment to societal change and the willingness of the government to commit enormous resources to the problem of extremism and terrorism.

Some of the success of the Saudi model is based upon its multi-prong approach of tackling extremism. The Saudis even offer support for prisoners, and terror suspects' families. The program focuses on prevention through campaigns in schools and social service agencies by spreading awareness of extremism and

takfeeree ideology. Also, the authorities attempt to discourage recruitment and provide alternative recreation to the *takfeerees*. *Salafee* scholars in Saudi Arabia have been denouncing for years the various programs the *takfeeree* and *hizbee* groups use to recruit Saudi youth. The counterterrorism programs implemented by the Saudis also have a counseling component. "The counseling program is based not on punishment or retribution but on a presumption of benevolence; that is, the state does not seek to exact revenge through this program. It begins from the assumption that the suspects were lied to and misled by extremists into straying from Islam" (Carnegie Papers 2008:97/11).

The Saudi approach to extremism and radical ideology makes use of the religious establishment on which it depends upon for its legitimacy. In addition, to the multitude of programs which encourage dialogue between scholars and youth convicted of terrorism the state has a long history of discouraging internal rebellion and in more contemporary times protests which *Salafee* scholars view as a type of revolt and call to instability (Green 2009). Bin Baz states, "I do not believe that men and women protesting is a cure (to societal grievances). Instead I see this as a means of causing tribulation, a means of evil, and oppression with some people usurping the rights of others. In contrast, the *sharee'a* means is through writing, advice, and calling to righteousness..." (al-Duweesh 2007:15/378). The *Shaikh* here is referring to some *hadeeth* which mention that advising the leader for mistakes, oppression, and sinfulness should be done in private by those that have access to the leaders and avoid openly criticizing from the pulpit which has the effect of encouraging instability or belittlement of the leader in the eyes of the common folk. Bin Baz states:

Then it is an obligation upon the preacher to be tolerant and use excellent, gentle, kind means in his *da'wa* for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Kindness is essential in dealing with everyone, also the leader.... This is because the leaders, presidents, and dignitaries, require additional gentleness and good manners in hope that they will accept the truth and be affected by it" (binbaz.org 2017).

The Prophet (saw) stated, ""Whoever wants to advise a leader with a matter, do not do it outwardly but let him take him by the hand and go into seclusion with him. If he accepts it from him then that (is good) and if not, then he (the adviser) has fulfilled that which was upon him (to do)." (Ahmad 1972:3/403-404). The *takfeeree* groups often scrutinize this *hadeeth*, and those similar to it in meaning, and call into question its authenticity. *Salafees* respond by suggesting that because it disputes their *manhaj* of rebellion and *takfeer* they call into question its genuineness. *Shaikh* al-Fawzaan is of those scholars who hold the text to be legitimate and he states regarding the *manhaj* of addressing the leaders:

Infallibility is not for anyone except Allah's Messenger. Rulers are humans and they make errors... but do not make their errors a reason for you to publicize them and remove yourself from obeying them, even if they may be oppressive and unjust, and even if they may be sinful, so long as they do not commit clear disbelief. This is what the Prophet commanded us (al-Fawzaan 2012:50-51).

Overall, The Saudi state and *Salafee* religious establishment has waged an aggressive counter-terrorism campaign since 2003 by actively denouncing terror networks, cutting off funding to various international groups and organizations, which sponsor terrorism or advocate violence. *Salafee* clerics have actively published books and treatises expounding upon the *Salafee* positions regarding controversial issues like *jihad* and *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* and countering extremists' narratives and ideology.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that extremist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS differ with *Salafee* interpretations of Islam and core concepts such as *jihad*, *takfeer*, and *da'wa*, and that those differences are both in elements of creed and *manhaj*. The chapter began by contrasting *Salafee* definitions of terrorism and extremism with those of the Global Terrorism Index. Then the chapter analyzes the *manhaj* of ISIS and al-Qaeda with intrigue into their brutal tactics and abuse of the principles of

takfeer to delegitimize their opponents. In contrast, *Salafees* categorize *takfeer* into two categories: general and specific and refrain from applying general rulings to specific individuals except with indisputable evidence and meeting the criterion for *takfeer*. *Salafees* consider the purport of such rulings claiming they should be *sharee'a* based and not whimsical. In addition, *Salafees* believe *takfeer* is not legislated due to disputes or differing between scholars or *hizbeeya*. Ibn Taimeeya states, "For this reason the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna* did not pronounce *takfeer* upon those who differed with them" (2013:1/164).

The chapter ends with an analysis of statements of *Salafee* scholars denouncing the *takfeeree manhaj* in general with a scrutiny of ISIS and al-Qaeda as specific case studies. In addition, the Saudi government's anti-terrorism efforts have been evaluated. Although the Saudi regime has been associated with numerous human rights violations and accused of war crimes in places like Yemen, these accusations are not a reflection of *Salafism*, but rather Saudi government policy.

In conclusion, it is difficult to quantify or completely qualify the effectiveness of the *Salafee da'wa* in combatting extremists; however, *Salafees* appear to be one of the more active Muslim groups in refuting *takfeeree* ideology and offering counter-extremist discourse and narratives as will be explored further in chapter four.

Chapter Three: Critics of *Salafism*

Introduction

Chapter one detailed the creed and *manhaj* of *Salafism* by illustrating the differences between *Salafee* thought and that of *hizbee* groups. In chapter two, terrorism and extremism were defined by surveying differing perceptions of the two concepts and contrasting the *Salafee* perspective with that of contemporary Islamic groups considered extremist. The chapter ended with an analysis of *Jihaadee* methodology, and a critique by *Salafee* scholars of *hizbee* ideologies with a brief synopsis of *Salafees'* role in countering extremism.

In this chapter, some of the main detractors of contemporary *Salafism* will be scrutinized by presenting an overview of their critiques of *Salafism* with an emphasis placed on their ideologies, to better comprehend their analyses and assessments. This chapter aims to present a contrast to *Salafees'* conceptualizations of their role as an antidote to extremism. Also, the chapter will outline Wiktorowicz's classification and offer detailed observations. Finally, the chapter will end with counterarguments to the critics.

***Salafism* as Violent Ideology**

Most detractors of *Salafism* view it as an extremist dogma and the fundamentalist ideology of most contemporary Islamic political movements. *Salafism* is often scapegoated as the key factor in the rise of radical extremism. The association of *Salafism* with violence by policy pundits or claim that it is the ideology behind Islamic radicalism is widespread. This was shown by the plethora of quotes and claims surveyed in chapter one and two, which illustrated the vilification of *Salafees* and *Salafism*.

Contemporary *Salafism*, like the *Salaf*, have always had to contend with opposition to their *da'wa* efforts and their methodology in approaching the sacred texts.⁶⁰ However, contemporary *Salafees* since the inception of the Saudi state have had to contend with accusations of violence and extremism. Often the term *Wahhaabee* is used as an expression to denigrate *Salafees*. Critics of *Salafism* have coined the term *Wahhaabee*, which is used as a derogatory term, to describe proponents of *takfeeree-Jihaadee* ideals. Although the movement of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab is not without controversy, its proponents have exerted immense efforts to show its orthodoxy through arguments and evidences derived from the Qur'an and *Sunna*, and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf*, especially regarding those issues of controversy such as *Jihaad* and *takfeer* (Green 2009). Still there are numerous detractors who view the movement to be the source of contemporary 'Islamic' terrorism and violent *takfeeree* ideology, Gold states:

That is why Wahhabism [*sic*] as it developed in Saudi Arabia is so dangerous, why it demands the attention of America and its allies. This radically intolerant form of Islam, has shaped public opinion toward the west in Saudi Arabia and in key parts of the Islamic world; it has influenced Osama bin Laden from his earliest years (2003:7).

Gold further makes his case to link *Wahhaabism (Salafism)*, which he claims is a violent ideology, to terrorism and suicide bombings when he poses the question, "How, then, has Saudi Wahhabism [*sic*] fostered the ideology of hatred that spawned suicidal terrorism? This question is inevitably linked to the question of how Wahhabism [*sic*] has treated the Islamic concept of jihad [*sic*]" (2003 p.7). There are numerous critics and skeptics of *Salafism*, and not all of those who criticize the movement use well-researched data. Gore's assessment tends to be less relevant amongst academics as more contemporary analysis of the problem emerges. An evolving body of research suggests that the movement has non-violent strands, which actively denounce terror. Still others like Abdul Hakim Murad claim, "The movement for traditional Islam will, we hope, become enormously strengthened in

⁶⁰ Imam Karamaane (died 280 *Hijra*) states, "*Ahl al-Bid'a*, people of desires, and sectarianism have all kinds of wicked slanderous names to describe *Ahl al-Sunna*. They do this because they want to belittle them, slander and backbite, and discredit them in front of the ignorant and stupid ones" (Aalee Hamdaan 2012:62).

the aftermath of the recent events, accompanied by a mass exodus from Wahhabism [*sic*], leaving behind only a merciless hardcore of well-financed zealots... only a radical amputation of this kind will save Islam's name..." (cited in Lambert 2013:211). Murad, an Oxford professor and Sufi, has no reservations in deeming *Salafism* i.e. *Wahhaabism*, as an aberration in Islam. *Salafees* counter that the movement is misunderstood even though many *takfeeree-Jihaadees* quote from the core texts of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab and describe their violent activities as extensions of his movement and ideals. Al-Madkhalee rebuts, "The people of misguidance from the detractors of *Imaam* Muhammad and the *Salafee da'wa*, tell a plethora of lies and from them are: he –may Allah have mercy upon him- declared the Muslims to be apostates, made it lawful to kill them, and that he detested the righteous saints..." (2015:44). These are common claims made against the movement, especially from Sufi cynics, because many of the more extreme practitioners advocate veneration of saints, for this reason, *Salafees* accuse them of polytheism, and they in turn accuse *Salafees* of extremism.⁶¹

Common Criticisms of *Salafism*

There are numerous critics of *Salafism* with a variety of perspectives and academic backgrounds. The research will attempt to introduce some common criticisms of *Salafism* and the rebuttals of *Salafees* and their perspective regarding some of their critics. Some common criticisms made against *Salafism* are that *Salafees* are ineffective at addressing extremism; lack proper mannerisms, misconstrue core texts, and are ill trained to meet contemporary challenges. Several critics allege *Salafees* are not doing enough to engage extremists and either encourage extremism, or at best are passive. Bunzel contends, "With jihadis [*sic*] openly laying claim to the Saudi religious heritage, the Saudi religious establishment might be expected to engage this threat in serious intellectual combat. Yet nothing of the sort has taken place" (Bunzel 2016:19). Chapter two detailed some of the Saudi state's

⁶¹ *Salafee* literature distinguishes between those *Sufis* who have methodological and creedal differences from *Salafees*, and those that are on the fringe of *Sufism* who maintain that it is necessary to seek intercession from saints and adore them.

counterterrorism strategies and *Salafee* scholars' repudiations of extremist discourse and violence. Bunzel fails to recognize these efforts and goes on to mention the example of Nogaidan, a liberal Saudi commentator, who in 2003 stated, "many [Saudi] religious leaders sympathize with the criminals" of al-Qaeda. He accused Saudi Arabia's 'educational and religious institutions' of being 'breeding grounds for terrorists' and called for reforms to 'our extremist religious culture' (Bunzel 2016:19). In view of what has preceded, the researcher suggests that Bunzel's critiques in this regard are outdated and much of the western world now acknowledges Saudi counter-terrorism efforts. In addition, Saudi authorities have exhibited willingness to counter extremist ideology.

Another area of contention between *Salafees* and their critics is the role of manners in *da'wa*. *Salafees'* mannerisms have also been identified as problematic, they are characterized as being harsh with critics and described as arrogant, especially in regard to how they interact with non-*Salafees* and tend to castigate them. Qadhi states:

This also explains the disproportionate focus on identifying deviants and deviation, which has led to an absurd result of some *Salafi* [sic] laymen knowing more about deviant beliefs than correct ones. The Madkhalīs [sic] are the quintessential example of this: any recent convert to Islam from amongst them will be able to recite a list of names of scholars 'on' or 'off' the *Salafi manhaj* [sic], but will be hard-pressed to mention as many names of Companions; they will know the 'ruling on greeting a deviant' but remain ignorant of the *adhkār* [sic] for the morning and evening (2014:14).

Qadhi's scathing indictment is a common claim made against Western *Salafees*, who are often not educated in Islam, and are usually not well positioned to communicate and receive the educative and moral reformation offered by being educated directly by Islamic scholars. In more recent times there has been an observable shift by some *Salafee* scholars to emphasize morals, manners, and

spiritual education to educate Muslim minorities about religious priorities and to counter the claims of their critics.⁶²

Another issue is the treatment of a ‘person of deviation’. Salafīs [sic] take statements of the Salaf regarding treatment of heretical groups as they would the Qur’an and *Sunnah* [sic]. Yet, the treatment of innovators that some of the Salaf exhibited is something that must be understood in light of the Sacred Texts, and in the context of their times. The rights of Islamic brotherhood, as outlined by our Prophet (ﷺ *‘alayhi wa sallam*), trump the statement of any one particular scholar, and the treatment of those opposed to the truth varies according to time, place, individual, precise deviation, and context (Qadhi 2014:14).

Qadhi raised some important issues such as the preservation of Islamic brotherhood, avoidance of being selective in choosing the statements of the *Salaf* to aid one’s methodology at the exclusion of other texts and decontextualizing the statements of the *Salaf*. However, he fails to mention the plethora of statements, which illustrate that refuting *Ahl al-Bid’a* was an important foundation of *Ahl al-Sunna* that distinguished them from heretics, and a means of preserving the religion from heretical practices. The Prophet (saw) mentioned in Saheeh Muslim that wickedness should be changed physically also he declared that all *bid’a* is misguidance (al-Mundhiri 2000). These narrations as well as numerous others, for classical scholars like *Imaam* Nawawee, illustrate the importance of shunning *bid’a* and serving as a basis for refuting *Ahl al-Bid’a* to defend the faith, orthodoxy, and exposing heretical practices. The *Salafee* position, which seems more in accordance with the classical interpretations, states that a foundation principle should not be undermined for the sake of alleged general benefit or harmony of the community. In this case the foundation principle as understood by the *Salaf* is that refuting deviancy takes precedence over the general brotherhood. In other words, the commands to keep Islamic brotherhood are restricted and understood in light of the texts that repudiate *bid’a* and its proponents. Allah states, “As for those whose heart is deviated, they desire to follow the ambiguous verses seeking discord and a suitable interpretation (to support their whims)” (3:7). The Prophet (saw) states, “If

⁶² *Shaikh* Rabee’ al-Madkhalee, who Qadhi refers to, has several *fatwa* and treatises on morality derived from the Qur’an and the importance of Islamic mannerisms to observe (2005).

you see those who desire the ambiguous verses then they are those mentioned by Allah so beware them” (al-Bukharee 2001:5/121). *Imaam Ahmad* stated, “The foundation of the *Sunna* to us is ...the abandonment of innovations and every innovation is misguidance, also, avoiding controversies, and sitting with the people of desires” (2005:22). This statement of *Imaam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, also known as the *Imaam* of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa’a*, illustrates that warning against innovation, heresy, and *Ahl al-Bid’a* are core principles to *Ahl al-Sunna*.⁶³ Although it must be recognized the importance of contextualizing these narrations of the *Salaf*, refuting innovators is a well-known principle, which does not become deluded with time. *Salafees* argue that in contemporary times there is an even greater need to protect the faith from heresy and alien ideologies and that although Islamic brotherhood is an important part of faith, it does not mean that individuals and sects should not be warned against, reprimanded, or even boycotted if they threaten orthodoxy. For example, if scholars were to remain silent about the deviancy of *takfeeree* groups then they would remain unchallenged and allowed to spread their deviant violent ideology, thus sowing discord within the community and between other faith based communities. Ibn Taimeeya states that the role of *Ahl al-Sunna* is to correct heretics while illustrating mercy for the creation. *Ahl al-Sunna* “is merciful to the creation and wants good for them, guidance, and knowledge. They do not intend evil for them initially, rather they punish them by exposing their mistakes, ignorance, and oppression with the intention to clarify the truth, show mercy, command the good and forbid the evil, exalt the word of Allah, and make the religion pure for Him” (2000:3/203). Just as Islamic brotherhood is important, so is defending orthodoxy. From the science of *hadeeth* authentication comes the criticism of narrators. This is just one example illustrating that the concept of

⁶³ Refer to *al-Sunna* (al-Khallaal 2011), *Sharh Usool al-’Itiqaad* (al-Laalakaa’ee 2002), *Sharh al-Sunna* (al-Barbahaaree 2009), *al-Sunna* (’Aasim 1998), and countless other compilations of the *Salaf* that illustrate this central foundation principle of Islam according to the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna*. Ibn Taimeeya states, “Allah has commanded us to only speak the truth and only speak based upon knowledge. He has commanded us with justice and balance. Therefore, it is not permissible if a Jew or Christian, even moreso, a *Rafidha Shi’a*, speak the truth for us to reject it or abandon the statement. Instead we reject what is false and accept the truth (2000: 2/342). This illustrates that truth and principle are prioritized over Islamic brotherhood, and mistakes and *bid’a* are rejected from anyone.

brotherhood is not absolute and that a Muslim's trustworthiness, piety, and religiosity can be called into question, which is a principle all throughout Islamic law. Several academics in their critique of *Salafism* have suggested the need to contextualize the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and the narrations of the *Salaf*. For example, concepts like *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a* should be looked at in context and it appears that this is something that distinguishes the discourse of contemporary *Salafees* over the past fifty years from the discourse used by the *Salaf* until the time of the founding of the Saudi state. Due to advancement in science and technology as well as new world realities *Salafees* have had to contextualize narrations of the *Salaf* in order to maintain relevance by exercising *ijtihaad*. This is best illustrated by some of the religious *fataawa* issued by more contemporary *Salafees* in comparison to that of their more immediate predecessors. For example, there are two opposing views regarding the issue of seeking help from non-Muslims in fighting: a group of scholars allow this and another group views it as impermissible without exception. From the statements of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab and his successors, prior to Bin Baz, it appears they hold the latter view and issued strong statements in this regard. The other view, was supported by a group of classical scholars who held seeking assistance from non-Muslims only "if there is necessity, and this was the *mathhab* of the *Hanifeeya*, the correct view of the *Hanbalee* school, and the *Shaafi'ee* school..." (al-Daalee 2013:1/99). The aforementioned *mathhabs* stipulated that only out of necessity could assistance be sought from non-Muslims. As with many issues explored in this research, we find that groups like ISIS do not offer or even begin to detail issues and show the alternative views supported by classicists, which further illustrates their rigid *hizbeeya*, and failure to acknowledge classical scholarship, counter to their claims. Another example of a *fatwa* that must be properly contextualized is that of *Shaikh* Abaabutain, who mentions regarding the issue of non-Muslims residing in Muslim states that, "the scholars of *fiqh* have mentioned his wealth and blood is protected with certain conditions; from them is paying *jizya* in a state of humility as the Almighty has mentioned. If they do not pay *jizya* or slander Islam or openly celebrate their holidays or violate other conditions mentioned: then their blood and wealth are lawful. Therefore, if a Muslim can take

their wealth in this case, then it is permissible for him to do so" (al-Tameemee 2017:178). The reason this *fatwa* needs to be detailed is because most of Islamic history until the demise of the Ottoman Empire could be divided into the categories used by classical Islamic jurists.⁶⁴ The rise of the nation-state, industrialization, globalization, and numerous ideologies challenging traditional religious views have all radically impacted how states and religious communities view and interact with one another.

Islam is witnessing unprecedented ideological attacks from radical secularism; these attacks seek to render Islam in particular - and religiosity in general - anathema to modern society. New atheism and scientism are increasingly in vogue amongst public intellectuals. Modern culture reeks of materialism, hedonism, pornography, and sexual exploitation. Extreme ideologies, including radical-feminism, abound. Quite frankly, rare is it to find a *Salafi* [sic] scholar who is even qualified to discuss these issues, much less refute them; and when one does find such a scholar, it is not *because* of his *Salafi* [sic] training but *in spite* of such training that he is able to take on such challenges (Qadhi 2014 p.15).

Qadhi asserts that *Salafee* scholars are ill prepared to deal with contemporary challenges and changes in concepts of morality, that have been imposed upon societies across the globe. The *Salafee* response can be divided into two ways. First, that this global crisis of morality, although unprecedented, should be addressed similarly to how the Prophet (saw) addressed the challenges his society faced: alcoholism, adultery, infanticide, paganism, and homicide. The Prophet's (saw) method of addressing these social ills was, of course, governed by revelation, which dealt with these problems in stages. Prohibitions were introduced gradually at the same time faith was being built and when Muslims were strong in faith they were expected to abandon sins. *Salafees* invoke this strategy: true understanding and practice of monotheistic principles and faith rectifies both the individual and society. The second way *Salafees* respond to Qadhi's claims is by highlighting

⁶⁴ The most important characteristics of *dar al-Islam* that distinguish it from *daar al-kufr* are: that Muslims are firmly established in the land, the signs of Islam should be present: call to prayer etc.... Islamic rule should be apparent, safety for Muslims to practice and reside. The prime characteristics of *daar al-kufr* are: most residents are disbelievers, lack of Islamic signs and security for Muslims. *Daar al-kufr* can be further divided into *daar al-ahd*: land of treaty or *daar al-harb*: land of war (al-Daalee 2013:1/99).

inherent communal dissonance. For *Salafees*, true substantial Muslim unity can only be achieved through a united creed, methodology, and cohesive goals. It is exactly these diverse ideologies and creeds that set Muslims apart and are the central reason for disharmony and discord in the community. Many Muslims have a false sense of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a*, and their varying goals tend to maintain those schisms (*hizbeeya*) that Qadhi so urgently wants to heal. Many Muslim groups have divided due to various allegiances to *Imaams*, sects, and even transnational identities that keep them from a common methodology for approaching problems or striving for a collective cause.

Skeptics and Inept Criticisms

Because *Salafism* has been demonized, typified, and identified by so many in the media, policy pundits, and academics, it has resulted in a glut of literature which has allowed for the rise of many pseudo-academics and so-called experts to critique *Salafees* without proper review or even access to the sources of the movement. This inaccessibility has led to many skeptics of *Salafism* to cut and paste sources without any rigid academic scrutiny, resulting in weak analysis of the real issues at stake and the policy implications of their ineptitude. Erroneous statements such as, *Salafees* reject the four jurisprudential schools of thought “including the jurisprudence made on the basis of *ijtihad* [sic] (interpretation), (this) is the center of this doctrine, only lessons or extracts from pious ancestors being acceptable” (Ungureanu 2008:3). Ungureanu also states, “Searching the empirically quantifiable values of Islam, Wahhabism [sic] has become empty of spirituality and values such as human dignity, love or compassion, thus representing deterioration in its axiological horizon of the original Islam” (cited in Ungureanu 2008:4). *Salafees* counter that their creed and *manhaj* are complete and their call is based upon a return to those very esteemed virtues and principles contained in the *sharee'a*. Unfortunately, many ‘Islamic academics’ do not seem to distinguish between Islamic tenets and un-Islamic heresies. Determining what is a heresy requires rigid scholarship and analysis of the creed and methodology of *Ahl al-Sunna* from the

time of the Companions until contemporary times. The inability to distinguish core tenets of the faith, predominately a Western problem, only further obscures Islamic scholarship resulting in confusing *Salafism* with extremists' beliefs and attributing unorthodox beliefs and erroneous claims to *Salafees*. For example, claims such as “*Salafis* [*sic*] consider that worshipping of the saint's remains is fundamentally alien to Islam and therefore corrupting. As Wahhabism [*sic*], *Salafist* tradition rejects all four Sunni schools of law” (cited in Ungureanu 2008:6). This assertion is flawed on a number of levels; however, listing two errors should be sufficient for illustration. First, it assumes that *Salafees* reject the four *Imaams* in general, and their jurisprudence and creed specifically. Second, it also attributes saint worship as a common tenet of the four *Imaams* and their followers, which is clearly not the position of *Salafee* scholars, nor the positions of the four *Imaams*. These claims have been sufficiently addressed, expounded upon, and countered in chapter one and in the researcher's research prior to this thesis (Green 2009).⁶⁵

Other critics of *Salafism* claim that the root of extremism is Islam and the Qur'an itself. This narrative posits *Salafism* and Islamism on the same spectrum. This claim is similar to Flynn's assertion that returning to the sources of the religion is what fuels extremism. Glen Beck, a popular conservative radio host and author, epitomizes this negative stereotyping of Islam. “But the fact remains that the Quran and Islamic law contain ample justification for subjecting non-Muslims to Muslim power...the Quran itself often works against those who present a benevolent, tolerant, image of Islam” (Beck 2015:141). In this view, Islam and its sources are brutal and barbaric, thus the need for reform, and amongst their claims is that the goal of most Muslims is to impose the *sharee'a* on the rest of the world. Islam is seen as archaic, undemocratic, and the core of the ‘extremist problem’, and thus desperately in need of reform. Beck contends, “Too many Americans still take at face value the lies of our nation's leaders that Islam is fundamentally ‘a religion of

⁶⁵ Supplicating to the dead, seeking intercession, or sacrificing to them, or directing any act of worship to the deceased is considered polytheism. However, *Salafees* regard visiting such shrines as *bid'a*, which does not invalidate one's faith. Furthermore, contrary to what Ungurnea claims *Salafees* hold the four *Imaams*, as mentioned previously, as the *Imaams* of *Ahl al-Sunna* in creed and method (al-Khumees 2015).

peace” (2015:206). From amongst Beck’s many claims is that Islamic extremists are always depicted as victims by leftist media and this fallacy of the left contributes to the problem of extremism. He states:

The subtext is almost always that these terrorists are angry because of something America has done. Maybe their brother was killed by a drone attack. Maybe they heard about a Quran being burned or flushed down the toilet at Guantanamo. Maybe they saw images on Al Jazeera of Palestinian refugees suffering at the hands of Israel’s blood thirsty leaders- images that were probably not even taken in Gaza... or maybe they suffer because of the cruel, cynical bargains Western nations have made with Middle east dictators in a quest for oil (2015:148).

Beck’s central claim is that Islam is the problem and that leftwing extremists and the power structure fail to acknowledge this, and this lack of awareness and vigilance will wreak havoc on America and its core values. Beck’s conception forms the underlying thesis of the new Trump administration. Although some of the well-known Islamaphobes, like Steven Bannon and Michel Flynn, were recently dismissed from the administration due to their own personal scandals, their policies and influence will more than likely have longstanding consequences for Muslim minorities, rather minorities in general, in the United States. Policies such as the ‘Muslim travel ban’ targeting some Muslim countries, the laptop ban, the failure to mention the rise in attacks upon Muslims and minorities in the media, and even the failure of the Trump administration to acknowledge the many mosque attacks, sporadic killings, and brutality that is on the rise by primarily white extremists in the United States. A Huffington Post article cites, “More than 569 anti-Muslim attacks took place over a span of 512 days in America. Many global citizens are concerned Trump’s rhetoric has only made things worse for the Muslim population” (Buchanan 2017:1). Beck’s book *“It’s All About Islam”* meticulously details the leading fallacies about Islam. In it he illustrates extreme bias by refusing to acknowledge other factors, aside from ideology, that contribute to extremism. He asserts, “They are attacking us because they are motivated by an ideology that urges them to kill in the name of God, that upholds martyrdom over life, that insists martyrdom will be rewarded by heavenly pleasures” (2015:151). While this narrative may be

appropriate in critiquing ISIS, this does not constitute the views of the vast majority of Muslims, moreover, the belief of *Salafees*. After the horrendous Charlie Hebdo attack in France he stated, “Islam apologists go to great lengths to disconnect these acts of violence from Islamic doctrine; to present them as something unrelated to the religion’s core tenets” (2015:193-194). These assertions not only affect *Salafees* and their *da’wa*, but it has implications for the greater Muslim community. Aside from poor scholarship, Beck’s analysis of the problem of extremism on the part of some Muslims, does not seem to acknowledge whatsoever the rise in anti-Muslim extremism, or that it is even a legitimate issue. Furthermore, he does not seem to comprehend that most of the atrocities committed by ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram are against fellow Muslims as was demonstrated in chapter two. The claims made by Beck are insidious but must be analyzed as they form the views of a rising constituency of Americans and even some mainstream news outlets such as Fox News.

Still other critics fail to investigate *Salafism* and extremism or even illustrate any serious scholarship by failing to research primary sources and the unproven link between *Salafism* and extremism.⁶⁶ Some detractors allege *Salafees* abhor classical scholarship and are violent. “Refusing the four law schools - Hanafism, Malekism, Shafeism and Hanabalism [*sic*]- removing ethics and morality that have developed independently of the Quran, Salafism, sometimes called neo-fundamentalist Islamic ideology, has inspired most of the leaders of contemporary Islamist terrorist movements” (Ungureanu 2008:4). These claims do not appear to be well thought out or backed by solid research, which contributes very little to the already saturated body of literature that is built on the same basic assumptions about *Salafism*. Most of these claims have been addressed in chapter two.

⁶⁶ One exception to this point is Dr. Yasir Qadhi, who renounced *Salafism* and has studied the tradition with numerous scholars. Qadhi’s analysis will be utilized for this study because he has first hand accounts and experience interpreting primary sources, whereas most of the critics utilized in this study do not have the same extensive training in *Salafism*. In this research a primary source refers to original first hand accounts dealing directly with factual documents and sources. Secondary sources are primarily accounts and analysis of what other researchers have produced. Often some of the secondary accounts used by some of the critics of *Salafism* in this study are lacking strong analysis of primary sources and therefore often biased in their criticisms.

However, regarding the assertion that they reject the four *mathhabs* and are proponents of extremism and *takfeer*, *Shaikh* ‘Abd al-Lateef Hassan, one of the successors of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, states, “To claim someone who openly illustrates Islam to be a disbeliever without any *sharee’a* basis or clear proof opposes the path of the *Imaams* of knowledge from *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa’a*” (2011:1/533). *Salafee* scholars show a fair amount of consistency in their writings and religious verdicts regarding their position regarding extremism, *takfeer*, and respect for the *Salaf*, which includes the creed and *manhaj* of the four *Imaams* of the *mathhabs*. Still, Ungureanu posits, “From the Salafi’s [*sic*] strict conception of Islam, which is sometimes at odds with real life, evil interpretations are born, finishing in terrorist (activities)” (Ungureanu 2008:6). The critics of the *Salafee manhaj* are many; however, not all them pursue solid academic methods and offer sound conclusions based upon well-researched data. For example, a summary of a report, used by the New York City Police Department, to religiously profile the Muslim community, and justify widespread surveillance of community members reads:

The religious/political ideology responsible for driving this radicalization process is called jihadist or jihadi-Salafi [*sic*] ideology and it has served as the inspiration for all or nearly all of the homegrown groups including the Madrid 2004 bombers, the Hofstad Group, London’s 7/7 bombers, the Australians arrested as part of Operation Pendennis in 2005 and the Toronto 18, arrested in June 2006 (Silber and Bhatt 2007:6).

The policies that emanated from this report have had enormous implications for the Muslim community and contributed to the implementation of widespread surveillance practices and stereotyping of Muslims as potential terrorist suspects. Silber and Bhatt go on to claim:

Implementation of sharia law and replacement of the system of nation states with a worldwide Caliphate are the ultimate political aims. While other Salafi [*sic*] currents encourage non-violent missionary or political activities to achieve these religious/political goals, jihadi-Salafis [*sic*] utilize endorsements of respected scholars of Islam to show that their aims and violent means are religiously justified (2007:17).

Silber and Bhatt do not appear to have made in-depth surveys of *Salafee* literature as they have summed the goals of all *Salafees* to be restoration of a caliphate, either through violent or non-violent means, but that does not reflect the ambitions of the movement as was demonstrated in chapter one. Others like Flynn illustrate open hostility towards Islam because of the extremist actions of a few. This deep-seated hatred towards Islam has led some detractors to claim the sources of Islam itself are the cause of radicalism. Flynn posits that Islamic law is comparable to the brutality of Stalin and Mussolini. He states, “I firmly believe that Radical Islam is a tribal cult and must be crushed.... Sharia [sic] is violent law that is buried in barbaric convictions” (2016:110). Researchers like Silber and Bhatt attempt to justify Muslim profiling and surveillance policies based upon the assumptions of writers like Flynn, by claiming *Salafee* mosques are breeding grounds for terrorist recruitment. They even claim to have identified stages of recruitment that take place in *Salafee* centers. “Two key indicators within this self-identification stage that suggests progression along the radicalization continuum are: Progression or Gravitation Towards Salafi [sic] Islam and regular attendance at a Salafi [sic] mosque” (2007:31). Silber and Bhatt’s report fails to properly analyze or comprehend the creed and *manhaj* of the *Salafee da’wa*. “They equate it with a political ideology and as being the ideology of al-Qaeda, and this is a cataclysmic misinterpretation” (salafimanhaj.com 2007). Unfortunately, Silber and Bhatt do not attempt to reference *Salafee* sources and scholars. Instead they attempt to link thinkers like Syed Qutb or groups like *Ikhwaan al-Muslimeen* to the *Salafee manhaj*; however, on the contrary they have both been extensively refuted by *Salafee* scholars and declared as heretics due to their creedal and methodological differences with *Ahl al-Sunna* (Green 2009).⁶⁷ The main errors found in Silber and Bhatt’s report can be

⁶⁷ Syed Qutb was known for reviving the creed of *takfeer* and making numerous controversial statements perceived as being declarations of *takfeer* upon whole Muslim societies. There has been extensive research linking Qutb’s thought and many contemporary *takfeeree-jihaadee* groups (Brachman, Felter and McCants 2006). In addition, the Qur’an, *Sunna*, and the viewpoint of majority of the *Salaf* illustrate that rebelling against a despotic Muslim ruler was considered impermissible. Most of the *Salaf* held the view that patience and preserving the unity of the Muslim community took precedence over the harm and bloodshed that would result from attempting to remove a tyrannical

summed up as follows:

All the mosques and individuals cited as Salafi [*sic*] were all vehemently opposed to the Salafi [*sic*] *manhaj* and erroneously cited. As for the “dozen examples” that Silber and Bhatt gave as evidence then the reality is not only that those examples had nothing Salafi about them at all and secondly, the overwhelming amount of people involved in such terrorist actions are distinguished by ignorance of the religion of Islaam [*sic*] generally, let alone the Salafi [*sic*] way particularly. Furthermore, they neither bring Salafi scholars as justification for their desperate and extreme terrorist actions nor do call themselves ‘Salafi’ [*sic*] (salafimanhaj.com 2007).

Orientation of Muslim Critics

It is important to understand the creed of Muslim critics to contextualize and deconstruct their arguments. This assists in determining their biases to better evaluate their criticisms. A part of understanding the critique of academics like El Fadl must come from an understanding of his creedal orientation to help assess his critiques of *Salafism*. This is not to undermine the merits of his scholarship, but rather to further gain insight into his criterion for assessing the *Salafee manhaj*. In addition, he represents and articulates a contemporary strand (modernist/progressive) in Islam, which is diametrically opposed to the *Salafee manhaj*. The positions of El Fadl about contemporary politics, the role of women, and issues pertaining to Muslim minorities shows just how divergent his views are from *Salafism*, highlighting his more rationalist approach to understanding creed. Chapter four will explore some of these tensions and examine contemporary *Salafees'* views regarding democracy and pluralism; however, for now it will suffice to detail some of the main arguments put forth by self-proclaimed progressives like El Fadl and their criticisms of *Salafism*.

leader (Green 2009). In contrast, Qutb held that *jihad* is, “to establish God's authority in the earth; to arrange human affairs according to the true guidance provided by God; to abolish all the Satanic forces and Satanic systems of life; to end the lordship of one man over others since all men are creatures of God and no one has the authority to make them his servants or to make arbitrary laws for them” (Qutb 2006:81).

Critics of *Salafism* often lambast *Salafees* for their literalist approach to textual interpretation and inability to provide solutions to contemporary problems. El Fadl criticizes the very premise of the *Salafee manhaj* and his critique appears to include *Ahl al-Hadeeth* whom *Salafees* ascribe their methods to.⁶⁸ El Fadl states:

The often-resulted tensions between the jurists and the literalist narrators of traditions (ahl al-hadith) [sic] whose analytical process, for the most part, consisted of the mechanical process of matching traditions with problematic factual situations. This methodology basically, consisted of restructuring all contemporaneous factual situations so that they would fit into a mold that was literally addressed by an inherited Prophetic tradition. This, of course, was fed by a myth that the Qur'an and *Sunnah* [sic] already addressed every possible factual situation or problem that might ever arise (2001:49).

This sentiment expressed by El Fadl is reflected in other more contemporary critics of *Salafism* like Yasir Qadhi, a reformed ex-*Salafee*, who has earned the disdain of many Western *Salafees* for his scrutiny of the *Salafee manhaj* after being one of its proponents. Qadhi muses:

The understanding of the *Salaf* includes many fundamental issues that are completely neglected or even contradicted by contemporary *Salafi* [sic] groups. Additionally, there is a methodological flaw in attempting to extrapolate a *Salafi* [sic] position (meaning: a position that the *Salaf* would hold) about a modern issue that the *Salaf* never encountered. The '*Salafi* [sic] position' (meaning one that is held by some scholars of the modern *Salafi* [sic] movement) with respect to questions on citizenship in nation-states, democracy, the role of women in today's society, the permissibility of voting, and the issue of *jihād* [sic] in the modern world, etc., are merely personal opinions (*fatāwā*) [sic] of the scholars who pronounce them and cannot be representative of the views of the first three generations of Islam (2014:121).

Qadhi is correct in asserting that there are numerous contemporary issues that the *Salaf* never encountered, and this creates a tension for both *Salafees* and traditionalists on how to accommodate these tensions. However, there is a general

⁶⁸ *Salafees* essentially view the methodology of *Ahl al-Hadeeth*, literalism, and using synonymous terminology of the Qur'an and *Sunna* as the safest means for avoiding ambiguity and confusion regarding one's faith. For *Salafees*, this lack of clarity in belief is a result of using rational deduction to affirm one's creed, rather than the authority of the sacred texts. A common claim made by *Salafees* is that there is no *ijtihad* when there is a definitive sacred text present.

methodology of analyzing evidences in making *fatwa* to deal with contemporary problems. When discussing contemporary issues or problems, it must first be determined if the issue requires a *sharee'a* ruling or not. Second, then the ruling should be derived by observing general *sharee'a* objectives if there is no clear solution from divine texts. Ibn Taimeeya states, "The scholar of *usool al-fiqh* looks at *sharee'a* evidences and its levels and distinguishes between what is *sharee'a* evidence and what is not and it requires analyzing the various levels of evidence until he can give preference to that which is strongest over that which has weakness if there is a contradiction between evidences" (al-Najjaar 2016:8). As has been mentioned previously, consensus of the *Salaf* is defined as what the *Salaf* agreed upon in creed, *manhaj*, jurisprudence, and other Islamic morays. Consensus, according to the working definition of this research refers to "the unanimity of the *mujtahideen* of the *umma* during a particular time regarding a religious issue after the death of the Messenger of Allah (saw). Therefore, whatever the *Salaf* agreed upon regarding understanding the Book and *Sunna* is obligatory to follow, because consensus is *sharee'a* evidence in and of itself" (al-Najjaar 2016:8). *Imaam* Abu Haneefa states, "If a *fatwa* of a Companion is given to me then I follow it, and I do not deem it permissible to disagree with it" (al-Najjaar 2016:15). *Imaam* al-Shaafi'ee states, "It is not permissible to have an opinion except from the foundation or an analogy of the foundation. The foundation is: the Book or *Sunna*, or an opinion of some of the Companions or the Messenger of Allah (saw), or consensus of the people" (al-Najjaar 2016:8). The relevance of mentioning these statements, which are known to Qadhi, is to show that a '*Salafi* [sic] position' is one in which the scholars of *Salafism* determine based upon returning to fundamental principles derived from *sharee'a* evidence. From the objectives of the *sharee'a* is that it only brings benefit to the creation. Al-'Iz bin 'Abd al-Salaam states, "All things pertinent to the *sharee'a* are beneficial: avoiding evil or bringing benefit" (al-Najjaar 2016:16). *Salafees* reason that the preservation of the *sharee'a* was entrusted to men, and refuting innovated practices, foreign ideologies, and *Ahl al-Bid'a*, are a part protecting the greater Muslim community and maintaining orthodoxy in the faith. Therefore, a *Salafee* position is one in which the *Salafee* scholars have reached a

consensus upon regarding a contemporary issue, and it is assumed that they use *sharee'a* based evidences sound reasoning and interpretation as a guide for issuing a *fatwa*. This process also involves general *usool al-fiqh* (principles of *fiqh*) and *qawaa'id al-fiqheeya* (fundamentals of *fiqh*) principles like: part of deriving a ruling on a particular practice requires accurate understanding of its circumstances. Al-Shaibaan mentions four reasons that govern *ijtihaad* that *Salafees* invoke. First, the Qur'an and *Sunna* often provide general prescriptions; therefore, general principles are derived from those sacred texts to warrant and govern *ijtihaad*. Secondly, the sacred texts provide a multitude of examples that clarify the general aim behind the text, thus understanding the intent behind a given text; helps provide governing principles for deriving rulings. Third, ambiguous texts also encourage *ijtihaad* in deriving rulings; however, this is not applicable to creed. Fourth, the sacred texts are limited in quantity, but world events, inventions, and situations are always evolving, which require new *ijtihaad* from the scholars (2012:1/88). The example of Mu'aadh, a Companion, when he was sent to Yemen best illustrates this methodology. The Prophet (saw) asked Mu'aadh about how he would arbitrate disputes if he did not find a direct solution in the Qur'an or *Sunna*. He replied saying he would strive in his opinion (al-Tirmidhee 1995). This illustrates that *Salafees* do not reject reason as long as it does not contradict clear unambiguous texts or give precedence to the rationalism of *Ahl al-Kalaam*.

While Qadhi views *Salafees* and *Salafism* as restrictive and unable to address contemporary issues, *Salafees* deem Qadhi as being one who has abandoned and belittled many of the principles of the *Salafee manhaj*, he is often described as being *tamyee'* or one who is ruinous toward the principles of the *da'wa*. One of the primary reasons Qadhi is often negatively depicted by *Salafees* is due to his criticism of the *da'wa* and his non-acceptance of *Salafism* as a divine path as espoused by *Salafee* scholars. He states, The fact that someone like myself, who was for a time associated with the movement, is pointing out mistakes that these other groups verbalized will naturally cause them to rejoice" (2014:20). Al-Madkhalee was asked about the term *tamyee'* and its implications regarding

Salafism, he responded by saying, “It refers to people who, when it comes to the fundamentals of Islam, reduce, belittle, and weaken them, rather they aggressively oppose them” (al-A’naabee 2015:108). Many critics of the *Salafee* methodology considered it too rigid, without offering prescriptions to contemporary problems and void of any scriptural contextualization. El Fadl contrasts the modernist interpretive discourse with that of *Salafees* when he states:

The legal process, which I refer to above, involves a dialectical engagement with God. God, in one form or another, speaks to human beings, and human beings, engage God’s speech through interpretation and praxis. The dialectic is experienced both at the level of abstract interpretation and at the level of use and action. There is a thesis, antithesis and eventual synthesis. Arguably, the synthesis is not final or permanent but simply a temporary stage until such synthesis is challenged by a new thesis and so on. The authoritarian interpretive process, however, will either adopt a thesis that it transforms into a final truth or will reach a synthesis that it will consider final and unchangeable. Put differently, the authoritarian interpretive process believes that it hears God loud and clear, does not struggle with much ambiguity, and if it engages in the dialectical process at all, it will cut this process short (2001:7).

El Fadl suggests that the authoritative process (*Salafee* model) is too rigid and fixed, whereas the moderates understanding is more pliable and evolutionary in keeping with contemporary times. In fact, he implies that the modernist/progressive way is more enlightening and intellectually vibrant, as a methodological premise as will be detailed shortly. The problem with this analysis is that this methodology seems more whimsical and without any parameters from the *Salaf* as a guide, and he infers their processes are irrelevant, outdated, and ill-equipped to confront contemporary issues and crises. It must be conceded that they did not face any of these current problems as was eluded to in chapter two; however, that does not mean that there does not exist parameters, and principles that should be used to deliberate judgments regarding contemporary crises. Still others like Wiktorowicz claim, “the *Salafi* [*sic*] creed outlines the rules for generating religious opinions to ensure that conclusions are methodologically sound and based on solid evidence... the expectation is that religious rulings represent the unadulterated and singular truth of God’s will because they rely on the original and pure sources of Islam”

(2005:8). It must be acknowledged, that some *Salafees* do display extreme confidence in the views of their scholars sometimes bordering on *taqleed*; however, it does not accurately reflect the entire movement. Moreover, most *Salafees* believe that by extrapolating a ruling from divine texts based upon proper contextualization gives religious verdicts there authenticity.

To illustrate the contrast between moderates and *Salafees* in understanding core religious texts it is necessary to look at an example of how they differ regarding *hadeeth* interpretation, and why moderates scrutinize *Salafee* methodology. El Fadl interprets the *hadeeth* that refers to the rewards of the *mujtahid*, by seemingly claiming it is for anyone who has a minimal level of knowledge. Simply applying original analysis and independent judgment to a legal issue merits reward from Allah even if the person is incorrect in judgment. The Prophet (saw) said, as collected in Muslim, “When a judge gives a decision, having tried his best to decide correctly and is right, there are two rewards for him; and if he gave a judgment after having tried his best (to arrive at a correct decision) but erred, there is one reward for him” (1999:1/132). *Shaikh* al-Mubaarakfooree, a *Salafee* scholar, explains this reward is for the one who has prerequisite knowledge to conduct *ijtihaad* and “possesses the tools for *ijtihaad*, understanding basic principles, and analogous comparisons. As for the one who has no right to make *ijtihaad*, then he will be held responsible, and is not excused for his mistake” (1999:3/158). El Fadl’s interpretation of this text, as many of his statements suggest, is that *ijtihaad*, interpretation and rulings are reserved for any ‘competent’ individual, whereas *Salafees* generally relegate and restrict these judgments to the scholars except for exceptional circumstances.

Another area of contention between moderates and *Salafees* is their various stances regarding Islamic pluralism. *Salafees* equate Islamic pluralism in creed or method with *hizbeeya*, whereas moderates view it in a positive light as enriching and enhancing religious tradition allowing greater flexibility in textual interpretation. El Fadl states, “Consequently, it is this notion of individual and egalitarian

accessibility of the truth that results in a rich doctrinal diversity in Islam” (2001:9). El Fadl was discussing the diversity of jurisprudence; however, when looking at his methodology and statements regarding dogma it seems quite plausible that he holds these views regarding creed. This is best illustrated by scrutinizing statements he has made reflecting a consistent doctrine contrary to that of *Ahl al-Sunna’s* (2007). The acceptance of a multitude of creeds is very entrenched in the Muslim communities of the West. Some of the reasons for this open embracing of various trends probably stems from the fact that many mainstream Muslim organizations in the US, were influenced by Muslim Brotherhood methods. Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood believed that “joining not separating” the community would achieve unity regardless of sectarian orientation, and that this principle was for the greater good of the overall Muslim community because to him every *da’wa* had both truth and falsehood. (2000:7).

El Fadl is a part of a social movement, which constitutes of a list of Muslim academics who refer to themselves as “Progressive Muslims.” These Muslim academics share a common ideology based upon reform and challenging existing textual interpretations, emanating from influences from rationalism and various modernist philosophies such as feminism. One unifying trend amongst the proponents of Progressivism is their disdain for *Salafism*. The relevance of citing some of their works is that it gives a fuller understanding of the orientation of some of the most vehement critics of *Salafism* within the Muslim community and illustrates the ongoing struggle between liberal rationalists and *Salafee* thought. El Fadl, Amina Wudud, a Muslim feminist who was the first woman in America to lead a mixed gender congregational prayer, and several other progressives coauthored a book of essays highlighting their ideology. Safi the editor of the collection states, “Progressive, in this usage refers to a relentless striving towards a universal notion of justice in which no single community’s prosperity, righteousness, and dignity comes at the expense of another” (2011:3). The progressives take a more humanistic approach to understanding Islam, which allows greater flexibility in engaging with other faith based communities by reinterpreting divine texts,

especially the Qur'an. Safi explains, "Central to this notion of a progressive Muslim identity are fundamental values that we hold to be essential to a vital, fresh, and urgently needed interpretation of Islam for the twenty-first century. These themes include social justice, gender justice, and pluralism" (2011:3). The pillars of their ideology are diametrically opposed to *Salafee* understandings of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a*. "At the heart of a progressive Muslim interpretation is a simple yet radical idea: every human life, female and male, Muslim and non-Muslim, rich or poor... has the same intrinsic worth" (2011:3). *Salafees* argue that this undermines basic Islamic principles, citing verses that illustrate the distinction of the believers from the disbelievers. On the otherhand, progressives cite texts that are specific in meaning that refer to Islamic brotherhood and broaden their scope to include humankind, which was not their intended meaning.

Progressives are eclectic in their creed and adoption of various trends from *Sufism* to rationalism, which grants them the flexibility to engage with the texts without the more literalist approach of *Salafism*. Safi States, "Progressive Muslims insist on serious engagement with the full spectrum of Islamic thought and practices" (2011:7). This is not unlike the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, who felt the various trends of Islamic thought all had something of benefit, which contrasts sharply with the arguments and exclusivism of *Salafees*. Safi also states, "Sufism has much to offer us...all Sufism is adab [sic]" (2011:11). In contemporary times there appears to be an amalgamation of *Sufism* and rationalist thought, especially in the West. This synthesis of ideologies is probably due to the freethinking spiritual nature of both trends, and progressives with their emphasis on resisting injustice, rethinking Islam for modern times, humanism, and critical thinking, find compatibility in both orientations. Safi states:

It is time to 'translate' the social ideals in the Qur'an and Islamic teachings in a way that those committed to social justice today can relate to and understand. We would do well to follow the lead of the Shi'i [sic] Muslims who from the start have committed to standing up for the downtrodden and the oppressed...yet how many people have also realized the Mu'tazilites [sic] (who have greatly affected Shi'i [sic] understandings of Islam) so valued

justice that they identified themselves as the folk of ‘Divine Unity and Justice’” (2011:9).

The quest for social justice and unity for progressives not only extends to the various Muslim sects, but also non-Muslims in their search for diversity. “Part of pluralism is measured by openness to engage sources of compassion and wisdom no matter where they originate” (Safi 2011:14). This shows the contrast between *Salafism*’s unwillingness to consider or include any other ideology that they view as alien to orthodoxy or Islam, whereas progressives are the polar opposites in that diversity and pluralistic thought are pillars of their ideology. Safi exhorts, “Living in the twenty-first century, I urge Muslims to consider that it is no longer sufficient to study only the Qur’an and hadith. In addition to those essential founts of wisdom, we need to be conversant with Rumi and Ibn al-‘Arabi, Plato and Ibn Sina, Ghazzali and Hazrat ‘Ali, Chomsky...Bob Dylan and Bob Marley” (2011:15).

Progressive views on *Salafism* are clear and their methodologies are probably the most antithetical to *Salafism*. Safi posits, “I view Wahhabism...as the single greatest source of the impoverishment of contemporary Islamic thought” (2011:8). The depiction of *Salafism* as a backward ideological trend is common for many of the sects that oppose them; however, progressives make it a part of their program to discredit *Salafism*. “It is imperative for progressive Muslims to resist the oppressive ideology of Wahhabism, but equally important to avoid the trap of dehumanizing the Wahhabi-oriented human beings” (2011:9). To illustrate the level of disdain progressives have for *Salafism* as a methodology, they prefer to cooperate and find more similarities in some of their concepts with non-Muslims than they do with *Salafees*. Safi asserts, “There have, of course, long been Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, avowed atheists, and others involved in many social justice issues. Increasingly, they now find themselves standing shoulder to shoulder with new Muslim friends” (2011:9).

Contrasts in Exegesis and Methodology

The theological orientation of both progressives and moderates, differ drastically from the *Salafee* perspective due to differences in textual interpretation and methodology of scrutinizing core religious texts. An example which illustrates both El Fadl's doctrine and methodology of scrutinizing *hadeeth*, is his negation of *hadeeth* that mention issues which appear incomprehensible such as the scales to be used on the Day of Judgment to weigh one's good deeds and bad deeds. It is important to distinguish between *hadeeth* sciences that involve scrutinizing text authenticity and criticizing the narrators, from those contemporary ideologues who actually criticize the use of *hadeeth* as a source of Islam. The latter, in their most extreme form, question whether *hadeeth* are even valid as a divine source. El Fadl asserts, *Salafees* take a literal approach to these texts. In contrast, he states, "While moderates consider these traditions to be inconsistent with the Qur'an, and no more than historical fabrications, puritans accept the historical veracity of these traditions and read and understand them in a rigid and literal way" (2007:128). This statement highlights an important difference in the methodology of moderates, as they do not analyze the texts for their authenticity by using the traditional means of analysis of *hadeeth* scholars, but rather they take a more rationalist approach.⁶⁹ Allah states, "Then, those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful. And those whose scales are light, they are those who lose their own selves, in hell they will abide" (1996:23/103-104). Ibn Taimeeya claims, "Scales will be set up to weigh the deeds of people" (al-Ja'eed, al-Juhane, and al-A'layane 2010:874). Amongst the *Salaf*, many scholars claimed there was consensus regarding the scale being a real substantive created thing. *Imams* Abu Hatim and Abu Zura', claimed, "We met scholars from all over: Hijaz, Iraq, Sham and Yemen and from their *mathhab* was...the scale is real" (al-Ja'eed, al-Juhane, and al-A'layane

⁶⁹ Many modernists tend towards rationalism and straying from classical interpretation similar to progressives. Perhaps a distinguishing trait of moderates is that they tend to adapt text to allow for modernization, whereas progressives are less bound by the texts themselves and more eclectic in approach. El Fadl notes, "Moderates argue that 'ijma' should not mean consensus or unanimity, but that it should mean existence of a simple majority. In addition, they assert that the views or vote of any citizen, Muslim or not, should count for the purposes of ascertaining the will of the majority" (2007:192).

2010:874). These texts illustrate that the Qur'an, *Sunna* and *Salaf* all support the belief that there is a scale to weigh deeds. Therefore, this belief is supported by the Qur'an; however, due to methodological differences it does not appear acceptable to rationalists. Ibn Taimeeya accurately summarizes the *Salafee* view when he states,

The intellect is not evidence in and of itself regarding Godly issues and the Day of Judgment. Therefore, what may be intellectually palatable is not accepted if it contradicts the *sharee'a* and does not conform to it. This is because the *sharee'a* is the statement of one who is faultless, who does not err, or deceive, and the narrations of the truthful one who speaks only fact. As for the opinions of men, they contain many contradictions, and frailties" (1997:1/108).

El Fadl is critical of accepting *hadeeth* texts; however, he claims that he considers them authoritative. El Fadl contradicts himself by scrutinizing *hadeeth* that contradict his paradigm even if the scholars of *hadeeth* have consensus on their authenticity. While discussing *Salafees'* reliance upon al-Bukhari he states, "The problem is that many of these traditions defy reason, or are offensively demeaning toward women and non-Muslims, or are blatantly inconsistent with the ethics and morality set out in the Qur'an" (2007: 153). This single statement best illustrates the contrast between moderates' orientation and approach to creed and *manhaj*, and that of *Salafees*.⁷⁰ El Fadl claims many *hadeeth* defy reason, further illustrating the methodological differences between moderates and *Salafees*. Whereas *Salafees* tend towards literalism moderates tend to affirm and authenticate *hadeeth* according to their intellect. *Shaikh* Sa'eed bin Halail, in an audio recording explaining the reform methods of rationalists like El Fadl, states:

The '*Aqlaaneeya manhaj* is built upon the intellect. Preference is given to the intellect over the texts. Meaning the Qur'an and *Sunna* are judged by the intellect, so whatever agrees with the intellect is accepted, and whatever disagrees with the intellect is rejected. It is an evil and false

⁷⁰ *Shaikh* Sa'eed bin Halail states about the new liberalism being propagated by some 'Muslim liberals,' "They bring new ideologies, cause fear in the hearts, and ruin the *sharee'a*. The first thing they do in distorting the *sharee'a* is spoiling the creed, then manners, and then they destroy the *sharee'a* rulings. They build their religion on opinions, intentions, and intellect; they do not possess anything from the *sharee'a* of Allah or the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw)" (*Hijra* 2017).

methodology and it is derived from the way of the *Mu'tazilla*. For this reason, some intellectuals and writers propagate this methodology, like Ghazaalee and those who traverse his *manhaj* in contemporary times: they deny some verses and the *Sunnan* of the Prophet (saw), with the claim that they do not agree with the intellect (*Hijra* 2017).⁷¹

Shaikh Muhammad al-Ghazaalee, was more oriented towards rationalism in his creed; although he gravitated towards *Sufism* in worship and rejected the literalism of *Salafees*. Some extreme rationalists reject *hadeeth* according to reason: whatever they do not comprehend or cannot accept cannot be considered as authentic.⁷² *Imaam* al-Shaatibee states, "All that I mentioned previously illustrates that voiding (authenticated) *hadeeth* based upon opinion is sinful and there are many examples to show that it is *bid'a*" (2009:2/68). El Fadl's insistence that many *hadeeth* in al-Bukhari are inconsistent with Qur'anic values is countered by *Salafees* claim that the Prophet (saw) illustrated Qur'anic values and its practice, and that his *Sunna* explained the Qur'an and offered details for ambiguous verses. This is because *Salafees* like most *Sunnis*, regard al-Bukhari's collection as the most authentic and important source in Islam, after the Qur'an, and traditions contained therein form the basis for creed, *manhaj*, jurisprudence, and the other religious sciences. In contrast, El Fadl asserts:

In contrast to the puritans, moderates apply systematic principles of historical criticism to the traditions attributed to the Prophet. Unlike the Qur'an, as mentioned earlier, these traditions were documented and preserved a few centuries after the death of the Prophet. In addition, the traditions clearly reflect historical circumstances, sectarian disputes, and political conflicts that took place years after the Prophet's death. Using modern methods of critical analysis, moderates conclude that many of these traditions are apocryphal or pure inventions (2007:154).

In contrast, *Salafees* often claim that the *Sunna* is a form of revelation and this is why they seek so hard to associate with the traditions of *Ahl al-Hadeeth*, who held that to question authenticated *hadeeth* was to question Islam, and divine authority. *Salafees* refer to the Qur'anic verse in which Allah states about the Prophet (saw),

⁷¹ Here the *Shaikh* seems to be alluding to the fact that some verses of the Qur'an were considered abrogated but were mentioned in *hadeeth* literature and remained as a form of legislation such as the verses mentioning stoning of the adulterer.

“Your companion has neither gone astray nor has erred. Nor does he speak of his own desires. It is only revelation revealed” (1996 53:2-4). *Imaam* al-Tha’labee (died 427 *hijra*) explains that these verses indicate the Prophet (saw) did not speak from his whims, or the meaning is that he did not speak with desires, and that whatever he said is from the religion (2015:25/86). *Imaam* al-Tabaree explicated the verses with a similar meaning (2012). *Imaam* al-Baghawee stated, “It means Muhammad (saw) did not deviate from the path of guidance. He did not speak falsely through his desires; this is because they (pagan Arabs) claimed Muhammad (saw) related this Qur’an from himself. However, whatever he speaks about the religion is revelation” (1987:4/245). *Imaam* al-Sa’ddee, a contemporary scholar of *tafseer*, explains, “He did not follow anything from himself or others, instead he followed what Allah revealed to him from guidance and God fearfulness. This is evidence that the *Sunna* is revelation from Allah to His Messenger (saw)... and that he is free from any error in delivery of the message about Allah and His *sharee’a*” (1998:965). El Fadl’s general approach to the divine texts further illustrates the methodological differences between *Salafees* and modernists regarding issues of faith. Regarding matters of faith El Fadl states about the Qur’an and *Sunna* that they “can inspire creative solutions to most problems, but this is a far cry from assuming that they can automatically yield solutions to life’s challenges” (2007:154). Similarly, *Salafees* believe the *sharee’a* offers solutions to contemporary problems but they recognize the need for *ijtihaad* to deal with contemporary issues. The *Salafee* methodology is best articulated by a statement of *Imaam* al-Shaafi’ee, who said, “Everything that happens to a Muslim has an applicable ruling, or he discerns the truth by using evidence which is contextual. Therefore, if there is a clear ruling: then he follows it, however, if there is not any exact ruling, then he strives to find evidence to attain the truth through *ijtihaad*” (cited in al-Shaibaan 2012:1/86). Al-Shaibaan, a contemporary academic, explains, “*sharee’a* and its basic principles are inclusive as a beginning point. As for those issues established which change, or are affected by different conditions, time, or place, then the *sharee’a* has general principles and has left the *mujtahideen* to derive a ruling using the principle and ruling appropriate to the situation” (2012:1/86).

Contrasts in Creed

Because modernists and *Salafees* differ in fundamental methods of how to approach sacred texts, their various interpretations result in a divergence in creed. In contrast to the rationalists' moderate methodology, the *Salafee* approach is that "the evidence used to support creed is three and there is no fourth category: the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and consensus" (al-Najjaar 2016:11). Al-Najjaar explains that the reason for misguidance and differing is due primarily to the use of alternative sources of evidence to support one's theology such as rationalism.⁷³ This method of deducing creed is construed by looking at the intellectually tangible to rationalize and affirm the unseen. Considering El Fadl's statements it appears that he is highly influenced by *Ahl al-Kalaam*. However, *Imaam* Maalik, al-Shaafi'ee and Ahmad rejected this means of ascertaining creed. *Imaam* Maalik states, "If *kalaam* was knowledge, then the Companions, and *Taabi'een* would have spoken about it like they mentioned rulings and *sharee'a*; however, falsehood is evidence for falsehood" (Harowee 2012:72-73). *Imaam* al-Shaafi'ee best articulated the position of the *Salaf* when he said, "My judgment regarding *Ahl al-Kalaam* is they should be beaten with branches, displayed on camels around all the tribes and it should be announced: this is the reward for leaving the Book and the *Sunna* and delving into knowledge of *kalaam*" (Abu Na'eem 2009:9/116). The *Salaf* were vehement in rejecting analogy in areas of creed and especially if they perceived analogy or the use of logic to contradict divine scripture. As was previously mentioned, *Salafees* do not outright reject logic and it may not be exactly accurate to describe them as pure literalists devoid of interpretive reasoning, as their detractors allege. For *Salafees* reason is a

⁷³ Rationalism, as practiced by *Ahl al-Kalaam* is understood as using one's logic and reasoning to authenticate or make judgements arbitrarily about creed. This methodology can lead to a negation of the explicit meanings of divine texts. For instance, *Salafees* do not negate the use of logic in an absolute sense: the *Salaf* used logic for textual interpretation, to determine consensus, and to make sound analogy. However, the *Salaf* took exception to rationalism that was used to distort the intended meaning of the Divine texts or contradict them, which led to unorthodox practices. Al-Taftaazane, an 'Asharee scholar states, "*Kalaam* is: knowledge of creed from evidence attained by certainty" (cited 2016:38). Imam al-Ghazaalee states, "The intended maxim of Knowledge of *al-Kalaam* is to preserve the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna* and protect it from the distortions of *Ahl al-Bid'a*" (al-Shalaalee 2009:171). For discussions of the *mathhab* of *Ahl al-Kalaam* see chapter one. The statement of Ghazaalee's illustrates the hostilities between *Ahl al-Hadeeth* and *Ahl al-Kalaam* and both groups viewed themselves as defenders of orthodoxy.

means to understanding divine scripture and at the same time scripture governs logic. The intellect is conditional for understanding knowledge and deeds can only be accepted from a person who possesses rational thought, intellectual capacity, and maturity. Ibn Taimeeya wrote extensively about how to adapt logic in accordance to divine scripture to rectify any perceived conflict, and that precedence was always to be given to scripture. According to this methodology, creed can only be deduced from divine textual origin not rationalism. For example, belief in Allah's divine names and attributes, or the angels is only understood and affirmed in light of the divine texts with reasoning being the force for explication. Ultimately, *Salafees* believe the intellect is used in *ijtihad*, textual interpretation, and sound use of analogies, as long as they do not conflict with divine texts or scholarly consensus.

Another area of contention between El Fadl and *Salafees* is regarding *tawheed* and the relationship people should strive to attain with Allah. Al Fadl states, "Submission to God through fear and obedience, for moderates, is considered primitive and vulgar" (2007:132). His reference to fear and obedience as being vulgar is quite in opposition to *Salafee* doctrine and even more importantly, the classical scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna*. Allah mentions in the Qur'an that, "Verily, those who fear Allah the most are the scholars" (1996 35:28). Fear and awe of Allah are positive traits in the *sharee'a*, which encourage the believer to be better and conscious of his or her deeds. In the aforementioned verse, Allah mentioned that those, seemingly the best of people, are those who possess knowledge and fear Him, which was stated in a positive sense. The Prophet (saw) states in al-Bukhari that "By Allah! I am the most knowledgeable about Allah and the most severe in fearing Him" (2009:1/68). To describe characteristics praised by Allah and His Prophet (saw) as 'vulgar' and 'primitive' does not seem befitting, nor can these statements be considered, in light of the texts, as legitimate Islamic views. Fadhail bin 'Ayaadh, a *Taabi'ee* states, "If it is said to you: do you fear Allah? Keep silent, because if you say no, then you have disbelieved. And if you reply yes, then you have lied" (Fareed 2011:181).

Islam, as defined by El Fadl is “surrender in which one is in complete tranquility and peace with that who is the object of surrender, the dynamics of this surrender is to know God and to seek godliness in oneself” (2007:133). This statement suggests that El Fadl holds a slightly alternative view to what the *Salaf* held, perhaps more in line with *Sufi* spiritualism; however, it remains unclear, as this researcher has not encountered clear statements, which illustrate his full concept of *tawheed*. He also, mentions that a part of loving Allah is to love and adore all of his creation; however, this appears to contradict the Qur’anic verses that highlight *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a* as discussed in chapter one. “To truly love God, one must love all human beings, whether Muslim or not, and love all living beings as well as all of God’s nature” (2007:134). In contrast, all throughout the Qur’an Allah distinguishes between the believers and disbelievers and emphasis is placed on allegiance to believers and disavowal of disbelief. Allah states regarding Prophet Ibraheem (saw) and his disavowal of his people, “Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allah, we have rejected you, and there has started between us and you , hostility and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone” (60:4). This and numerous other verses in the Qur’an illustrate that at a minimum Islam distinguishes between believers and disbelievers, calling for disavowal of unIslamic beliefs and practices, which challenge El Fadl’s premise that it is conditional to love all human beings to truly adore the Creator. Again, this highlights how different methods of interpretation of the divine texts create highly divergent views in creed.

One of the harshest claims of El Fadl, which illustrates his rejection and biasness towards the movement, is his claim that *Salafees* engage in *takfeer*, scrutinize and make judgments upon other Muslims, which in turn makes them legitimate targets of violence. He states, “According to moderate Muslims, no person or institution is authorized to judge the piety of another or evaluate the closeness of any particular individual to God” (2007:137). El Fadl’s concepts undermine much of Islamic law and he challenges the very foundations of the traditional jurisprudence that he so favorably speaks of. How do we account for the science of criticizing the narrators and transmitters of *hadeeth*? Or what is the basis for the plethora of traditions of the

Salaf, which criticize individuals for impious behavior, *bid'a*, and misguidance? And how can the rights of individuals be protected if not through judgments and arbitration by an Islamic judge? It seems odd that one with such high educational background in the Islamic sciences would make such claims and attempt to pass them off as Islamic. Baker best sums up the problems associated with the analysis of many of the non-*Salafee* critics of *Salafism* who depend solely upon secondary sources. He states:

The ideological differences and unswerving adherence to different schools of jurisprudence arguably influence non-*Salafi* [sic] academic findings. An example of this can be witnessed in the increasing contributions of Muslim academics from the Sufi tradition that have entered the arena to expound upon *Salafism*, often providing inconclusive data based on secondary sources of research without substantiation from primary evidence (2009:9).

The problem of academic bias is not unique to critics of *Salafism*; however, it is a challenge requiring academic honesty and diligence, to overcome partiality when reviewing sources and offering analysis. Also, a robust literature review dealing with primary sources can help to eliminate unbiased findings.

Internal Dissention

In contemporary Saudi Arabia, there appears to be a paradigm shift where leadership and more academics are calling into question *Salafism* as an approach. In Saudi Arabia, there has been a 'war of ideas', as Bin Baz coined it, raging for quite some time. This conflict of ideologies has led to changes within the society, a general reassessment of the educational system and a diminishing role of the clerical establishment. "In the last few years, the critique of Wahhabism [sic] has gained unprecedented momentum in Saudi Arabia. First formulated by a heterogeneous group of prominent liberal and Islamist intellectuals, it seems to have received the approval of at least part of the ruling elite who have taken a few official steps towards socio-religious reform" (Lacroix 2005:1). The recent decree of the King Salman to diminish the authority of the religious police and appoint his son

prince Muhammad bin Salman as his successor, is reason to believe many more reforms to the Kingdom and its religious authority are yet to come. From Analysts reports as early as 2005 there was tremendous speculation about the curtailing of religious authorities in the Kingdom and what that meant for the future *da'wa* efforts of the clerical establishment. "Huge changes have recently taken place in Saudi Arabia, especially within the local political-intellectual field. Significant among these is the rise to prominence of a group of "islamo-liberals," who are "made up of former Islamists and liberals, Sunnis and Shiites, calling for a democratic change within an Islamic framework through a revision of the official Wahhabi [sic] religious doctrine" (Lacroix 2005:1). Lacroix believes these so-called 'Islamo-liberals' are within the greater *Salafee* trend and place pressure on the clerical establishment to liberalize and reform. Interestingly enough, "some Islamic thinkers have, since the mid-1990s, formulated a *Salafi* [sic] critique of Wahhabism [sic]. Hasan Al- Maliki, the most prominent among these, castigates the doctrinal rigidity of Wahhabism and its tendency to imitate Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Taymiyya [sic] rather than to innovate as, he believes, genuine *Salafism* commands" (Lacroix 2005:2). Al-Maliki, has been written about extensively by numerous *Salafee* scholars in Saudi Arabia, many of al-Maliki's critics defend the *Salafee* creed as propagated in the school curriculum and they actively oppose his claims made against the scholars in the kingdom. One such critic, *Shaikh* Ibraaheem al-Rehailee devotes a whole treatise to refuting al-Maliki's claims. Amongst his criticisms are that al-Maliki vilifies the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna*, degrades the Companions, and claims the *Hanbalee* scholars are extremists including *Imaam Ahmad*. In addition, al-Rehailee refutes the claims made against Ibn Taimeeya, and Ibn al-Qayyim, the contemporary Saudi state and its scholars (2008). "Maliki called Saudi Arabia's official religious class extremists (*ghulat*) and blamed them for fostering a religious culture conducive to jihadi [sic] violence. It was futile for the religious establishment to counter al-Qaeda's jihadi [sic] ideology, he wrote, for the jihadis [sic] were merely doing what the religious establishment had taught them" (Bunzel 2016 p.19). After examining the claims of al-Maliki it seems a misnomer to include him amongst *Salafees*, rather

he is a staunch detractor of its principles and *manhaj* and his critiques of *Salafism* have been countered extensively by *Salafee* scholars.

Problems with Typology

Agreeing upon a common typology that accurately depicts *Salafees* has proven a daunting task for its critics. Many *Salafees* consider their methodology and orientation as simply another ideology infused with violence. “The problem begins when certain religious beliefs lend to claims that entire groups of people have no right to live and deserve to be slaughtered” (Gore 2003 p.15). With so many detractors who associate the movement with violence it becomes commonplace to classify *Salafism* as inherently violent. During the tumultuous time of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab and the early expansion of the Saudi state, there was significant sectarian violence and calls to fight the *Shia* and this was considered *Jihaad* by *Salafee* clerics. However, al-Madkhalee responds to opponents of the movement by claiming, “It is well-known that *Imaam* Muhammad did not fight until he was fought against: in defense of himself or the religion...sometimes he would fight those whose polytheism was clear, but he provided them with the evidence of their errors (first)” (2015 p.106).⁷⁴ This has led some observers to make comparisons between ISIS extremists and the *Salafee* movement and criticize the propaganda and *da’wa* activities of the Saudi state. According to Silber and Bhatt:

This ideology is proliferating in Western democracies at a logarithmic rate. The Internet, certain Salafi-based [*sic*] NGO’s (non-governmental organizations), extremist sermons/study groups, Salafi [*sic*] literature, jihadi [*sic*] videotapes, extremist - sponsored trips to radical madrassas and militant training camps abroad have served as “extremist incubators” for young, susceptible Muslims – especially ones living in diaspora communities in the West (2007:8).

This critique of extremists like ISIS, who they label as *Salafees*, and their recruitment efforts, is a blanket indictment of *Salafee* scholars as well. They report,

⁷⁴ To *Salafees* the concept of polytheism constitutes an act of worship directed to other than Allah or worshipping a partner alongside Allah. Actions such as supplication, prayer, sacrificing animals are all considered acts of worship (Bin Baz 2001 1/130).

“Contemporary Saudi (Wahhabi) [sic] scholars have provided the religious legitimacy for many of the arguments promoted by the jihadists [sic]” (Silber and Bhatt 2007:17). This is a common claim made by skeptics of the *Salafee da’wa*: scholars provide the legality to commit violence through their religious verdicts and that these practices are sanctioned by the Saudi state.

The tendency to blame *Salafism* for every violent incident or act of terror is overwhelming, primarily due to media propaganda, inaccuracies in scholarship and zealousness of policy pundits. A common criticism of many political pundits is that *Salafees* are *Jihaadees* whose number one goal is to establish a state through a means of perennial *Jihaad*. Much of the controversy comes from the differences in definition. Some modernists claim, “The Prophet Muhammad repeatedly taught that the greatest form of jihad [sic] is to struggle against one’s own base desires or to speak the truth before an oppressive power and to suffer as a consequence of speaking out. By the same logic, striving or working hard in war, provided that the war is just and good, is also jihad [sic]” (El Fadl 2007:221). While this definition still highlights the centrality of *Jihaad*, it does slightly differ to the *Salafee* emphasis on *Jihaad* as an institution. In contrast, *Salafees* believe that although *Jihaad* as a term is inclusive of all those meanings, as they can be referenced from *hadeeth*, the primary definition and usage, as mentioned in the Qur’an, *Sunna*, and as espoused by the *Salaf*, is fighting (Malooḥ and bin Ḥumaid 2004 vol 4). However, contemporary *Salafees*, as has been alluded to in the previous chapter, are quite restrained with regards to issuing verdicts of *Jihaad* and participating in global conflicts with few exceptions, but still many Western academics group *Salafees* with *Jihaadees*. In addition, it cannot be overstressed that the concept, tactics, and centrality of *Jihaad* differs between the two groups as well. However, Turner states:

Salafi-jihadism[sic] is a religio-political ideology based on a fundamentalist conceptualization of Islam that informs the actions of organizations like al-Qaeda. It contains a broadly defined format for a political order that unifies the Islamic peoples and governs them by a legitimate religious authority. It promotes violence in all its forms as a means for achieving this objective” (2014:11).

Turner, like many contemporary skeptics of *Salafism*, accepts Wiktorowicz's classification of *Salafism* and posits that there are various strands of *Salafism* with *Jihaadism* being the most violent variant. Another academic known, for his strong stance against *Salafism* and calls for a reformation of its core principles, is El Fadl. In his exposition of *Jihaadism*, which he also contends is a trend in *Salafism*, he states:

Puritans believe that they are engaging in a defensive war at the current time, not an offensive war. This has a rather odd result, because if it were an aggressive war (or what is called, in Islamic law, a preemptive war), at least the puritans could not commit violence unless they first gave Westerners the option of becoming Muslim. Since, however, puritans believe that they are waging a defensive war, the need for such notice does not exist nor restrain them (2007:232).

By failing to distinguish between *Salafees* and *Jihaadees*, and their differing methodological approaches to *Jihaad* by classifying them together, El Fadl denigrates *Salafees*, whose primary focus is *da'wa*. Also, the very method he advocates as the appropriate approach as a precedent to inevitable conflict, *da'wa*, is in compliance with the *Salafee manhaj*. Even Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahhaab, whose *Jihaad* is full of controversy, was known according to some sources to begin with propagation. If communities were resistant to the message due to ignorance or arrogance "he taught that the appropriate response to such a situation was to read to the erring individual the Quranic [sic] verses appropriate to the situation, to provide concrete evidence as to why the behavior was wrong. Only if the person then refused to behave appropriately did fighting become appropriate" (DeLong-Bas 2010:201). In another illustration of his failure to discern the *Salafee manhaj* from that of *takfeerees* and *Jihaadees*, El Fadl states:

The disagreements between puritans and moderates are very deep and profound in all matters related to warfare, jihad [sic], and terrorism. The disagreements relate to the sanctity and value placed on life and to what kind of example God wants Muslims to set before humanity. They relate to whether there is an open, never-ending state of war between Islam and non-Muslims, and at what cost this war may be fought (2007:233-234).

El Fadl classifies puritans (i.e. *Salafees* and *Jihaadee-takfeerees*) into the same category, however, he rightly suggests that there is a fundamental difference in how moderates and puritans read and interpret the Qur'an.⁷⁵ He states, "Basically, the difference in attitude between moderates and puritans has to do with the relationship of Islam to power. Puritans believe that for Islam to be victorious, Muslims need to conquer and subjugate others" (2007:245). As was noted in chapter two that *Salafees*, as the evidence alludes to, do not harbor aspirations to vanquish the world; therefore, their *da'wa* activities differ drastically from the global *Jihadists*, whom El Fadl's assessment more accurately characterizes. El Fadl's statement highlights the problem of overgeneralized typology. Furthermore, other academics like Hegghammer expound:

Many of the theological descriptors commonly used in literature on Islamism, such as *Salafi*, *wahhabi*, *jihadi Salafi*, and *takfiri* [sic], do not correspond to discrete and observable patterns of political behavior among Islamists...it makes no sense to speak of a '*Salafi* [sic] social movement', for the simple reason that actors labeled *Salafi* [sic] have widely different, often diametrically opposing, political agendas (Hegghammer 2011:5).

Hegghammer believes these categorizations (*Salafee*, *takfeeree*) are useful as classifications, which denote theological orientations, rather than political alignments, which suggests that *manhaj* and political objectives, do differ between the various groups, and this is one of the main reasons *Salafees* take exception to these externally typified classifications. According to Seth Jones, "a group is defined as *Salafi-jihadist* [sic] based on two criteria. First, the group emphasizes the importance of returning to a "pure" Islam, that of the *Salaf*, the pious ancestors. Second, the group believes that violent *jihad* is *fard 'ayn* [sic] (a personal religious duty)" (Jones 2014:21).

⁷⁵ El Fadl's characterization of Puritans differs with that of Wiktorowicz, who defines them as being essentially apolitical and concerned primarily with matters of worship. He states, "The bonding of the theologies of Wahhabism [sic] and *Salafism* produced a contemporary trend that is anchored in profound feelings of defeatism, alienation... not only from the institutions of power of the modern world, but also from the Islamic heritage and tradition" (2007:95). He also defines modernists as a particular group (that) deals with the challenges of modernity while others are reactionary-living in the past or seeking to return to the past" (2007:16).

ISIS and the Saudi State

Another factor that contributes to the improper categorization of *Salafism*, is the frequent comparison, by both critics and extremists, between the movement of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab and ISIS’s declaration of an Islamic state. Some critics like Bunzel compare between ISIS’s acquisition of territory and the establishment of the first Saudi state. “In some ways the Islamic State’s claim to the Wahhabi [*sic*] heritage is not unfounded. The early Wahhabis [*sic*] advanced an exclusivist version of Sunni Islam that was universally seen as a heresy, founded a state that waged expansionary jihad [*sic*] against fellow Sunni Muslims, and killed Shia Muslims because they were seen as hopeless idolaters” (Bunzel 2016:1). This association between the establishment of the Saudi state and groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda has infuriated the *Salafee* clerical establishment in Saudi Arabia, which have reacted by authoring a plethora of books and treatises defending the *manhaj* of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab and his movement. In addition, they dedicate numerous books and issue verdicts distancing the *Salafee da’wa* from the murderous ideology of *takfeeree* groups as was elucidated in chapter two. Furthermore, even some non-Muslim academics find the claims made by academics like Bunzel dubious and lacking solid factual data. “Although historical and contemporary discussions of Wahhabis [*sic*] and the Wahhabi [*sic*] movement tend to assume that whatever violence Wahhabis have engaged or currently engage in is due to an interpretation of Islam that emphasizes jihad [*sic*] as holy war, this vision is inconsistent with both the historical record and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s writings” (DeLong-Bass 2010:201). This statement emphasizes the importance of reviewing and analyzing the writings of *Salafee* scholars before making general assertions to disparage the movement.

Bunzel alleges that ISIS attempts to replicate the establishment of the original Saudi state, “an example of an Islamic state that spread *tawhid* [*sic*] via military conquest, killed the heretics standing in its way, and posited no boundaries to its expansion. The Islamic State is not wrong to see much of itself in the historical first

Saudi-Wahhabi [sic] state, a radical, expansionary state whose interpretation of Islam was condemned as fanatical” (Bunzel 2016:6). Assertions like this have found their way into the academic mainstream, which makes it very difficult for *Salafees* to untarnish their *da’wa*. According to Bunzel, ISIS has listed in its online publications numerous detailed comparisons between the two movements; one such publication concludes, “the Islamic State is an extension of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s mission [*dawa*] [sic] and state [*dawla*] [sic] —the first Saudi state” (2016:9). ISIS and other *takfeeree* groups are quick to denounce the Saudi regime as apostates, while at the same time claiming they are the flag bearers of the message. “The mainstay of the resemblance, according to the pseudonymous author, is both states’ determination “to fight *shirk* in all its forms” and to “implement Islamic law immediately upon seizing territory” (Bunzel 2016:9). ISIS claims to draw on ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab’s movement and writings as inspiration and justification for their massacres, which according to *Salafee* scholars, is an inaccurate assertion. “Ibn Abd al-Wahhab [sic] engaged in a more positive and inclusive approach of dialogue and discussion geared toward reconciliation and cooperation whenever possible. Fighting became an option only if the enemy refused both conversion and a treaty relationship with the Muslims” (DeLong-Bas 2010:201). While acknowledging that this claim of DeLong-Bas’s, might be considered by some as being embellished, it shows that the complexity of ascertaining historical data is not without its challenges. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab, after speaking about some polytheistic practices that had become prevalent during his time, states, “This is what we call people to and fight them about. After we supply them with evidence from the Book of Allah and *Sunna* of His Messenger (saw), and the consensus of the *Salaf*” (al-‘Aasimee 2012:1/58). Even Bunzel admittedly concludes that there are *manhaj* and creedal differences between the current Saudi state and that of ISIS. Bunzel, a vehement critic of *Salafism*, says, “Other features of the Islamic State’s ideology—from the declaration of a caliphate to the use of extraordinary violence to the group’s apocalyptic fervor—do not find a mainstream Wahhabi [sic] precedent” (Bunzel 2016:1). While ISIS in particular refers back to many *Salafee* sources, as well as *takfeeree* manifestos its *da’wa* and methodology are highly politicized and oriented

towards uncompromisingly violent distortions of *Salafee* concepts. For example, The *Salafee da'wa* rests on a vastly different premisis to that of ISIS and many other *jihadee* groups regarding leadership. *Salafees* believe that righteous leadership is established by learning, preaching, and implementing monotheistic concepts, with the inevitable result of reforming society, establishing *sharee'a* and guided Muslim leadership. Essentially *Salafees* take a more pacifist bottom up approach to establishing *calipha* or what they deem as acceptable Muslim leadership. They also hold that all Muslim leadership should be obeyed in righteousnous, even if the system is not completely *sharee'a* compliant, as was illustrated previously. Another important observation regarding *Salafees'* differing approach distinguishing it from ISIS and other groups that aspire to have *calipha* is that *Salafees* view leadership as a means to establishing Islamic law and order, and that it is an important goal, but not the overall objective of *da'wa*. Al-Albanee states:

Those callers want to reach the ultimate aim, which is to implement the rule of Allah on earth, renew the righteous *calipha* after the former one, and all Muslims agree that it is an obligation to establish. However, they differ over the means. Us *Salafees*, agree with their goal; however, we disagree with their means. Our means is that it requires beneficial knowledge, and righteous deeds. Beneficial knowledge is that which stems from the book of Allah and the *hadeeth* of the Messenger of Allah (saw) (2010:2/221).

To further illustrate how *Salafees'* tactics differ form ISIS's violent methods al-Shanqeetee states regarding the Qur'an verse 24:55, "We shall grant them succession (leadership) in the earth', that these verses show that obedience to Allah by beleiving in Him, and doing righteous deeds are reasons for strength, succession, and authority on earth" (2005:5/553). This verse along with many other Qur'anic verses illustrates that the means for establishing leadership is proactive; however, it is based upon following the commands of Allah and worship, which in turn is rewarded by Allah through establishment and authority. *Salafee* interpretation and methodology often contradict the *manhaj* of violence and fear groups like ISIS uses to achieve its goals. Overall, *Salafees* prioritize *da'wa*,

knowledge, and worship as being intrinsic to their call with *jihad* and *caliph* being means to establishing monotheism.

ISIS's tactics are not only distinct from *Salafees* and the movement of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab, they are often regarded as even being more radical than al-Qaeda. As chapter two illustrates one of the criticisms leveled by ISIS against al-Qaeda is that they did not implement *sharee'a* when occupying territory and did not wage an aggressive enough campaign against the *Shia*. However, contemporary Saudi Arabia and the *Salafee* clerical establishment are far less hostile toward *Shia* in their rhetoric. To illustrate, Bin Baz mentions that although some of the *Shia* commit major disbelief by claiming to have knowledge of the unseen, and excommunicating most of the Companions "this does not prevent calling them to Allah, guiding them to the correct path, and warning them from their false beliefs" (2001:4/439). This shows that *Salafees* prefer to proselytize rather than the violence so commonly associated with groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Anti-Shiism

Skeptics of *Salafism*, especially critics of the Saudi state, claim that *Salafees* and ISIS extremists both vilify *Shi'a* and incite violence against them. "Indeed, it is common practice for the Islamic State and its supporters to assert that their actions against the Shia [sic] are in accord with Wahhabi theology. They even maintain that their actions find sanction in the official teachings of the Saudi religious establishment" (Bunzel 2016:14). An example of the strong sentiment of the immediate successors to ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab is that of *Shaikh* Abaabutain (died 1282 *hijra*). The *Shaikh* was asked if the *Raafida Shi'a* should be considered apostates or disbelievers by origin. He replied, "We have judged with disbelief those who prostrate to Hussain or supplicate to him or similar to this and were raised upon that (belief) then ... the ruling of those people is they are original disbelievers, so their blood and wealth are lawful" (al-Tameemee 2017:179). These types of *fataawaa* illustrate the anti-*Shia* rhetoric prevalent during the early formation of the

Saudi state, and in more contemporary times due to a variety of factors, the rhetoric of the clerical establishment has toned down considerably; however, the economic and political factors which influence this change is outside the scope of this research. "The intrinsic anti-*Shiism* of Wahhabism [*sic*] poses a problem for Saudi religious scholars when it comes to condemning the Islamic State's attacks in the kingdom. The group and its online supporters accuse these Saudi scholars, sometimes rightly, of backsliding and hypocrisy." (Bunzel 2016:14). The softening of rhetoric by *Salafee* scholars, especially in Saudi Arabia, does not come without a price: further loss of credibility before their detractors. Bunzel states:

These accusations can be rhetorically powerful. For example, a lengthy Islamic State video from July 2015 features Saudi fighters in Aleppo pointing out contradictions in the scholars' statements. "A short time ago," one of the Saudis in the video says, "the scholars of the Al Salul [*sic*] were excommunicating the Rejectionists, indeed excommunicating the generality of them.... They excommunicated them, but when the caliphate fought them . . . they issued condemnations (Bunzel 2016:14).

So, the question could be posited: is ISIS's ultra-literal readings of the texts and *fataawaa* of the *Imaams* of *da'wa* appropriate for understanding the contexts of those texts, or have contemporary *Salafees* not remained true to the message of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab and his condemnation of the *Shia*? It appears that the former is more consistent with the data presented thus far, and that ISIS is an extreme aberration of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab's *da'wa*. ISIS is extreme, and their methodology of interpretation decontextualizes core texts, thus distorting Islam as a faith in general, and more specifically the *Salafee da'wa*.

Internal Polemics

Salafees have also experienced internal splits due to differences over how to respond to the Houthi *Shia* coup in Yemen. The recent rebellion of the Houthi militias in Yemen has exacerbated tensions between some Yemeni *Salafee* scholars and some of the well-known scholars in Medina, Saudi Arabia. Some of the major successors of *Shaikh* Muqbil bin Haadee like *Shaikh* Muhammad al-

Imaam, *Shaikh* Muhammad al-Wasaabee, and *Shaikh* ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Mar’ee supported a truce and cessation in hostilities with the Houthis citing the harm that would come to the *Salafee da’wa* if they fought or resisted the Houthis. In addition, *Shaikh al-Imaam* was forced in a publicized declaration to acknowledge the Houthis as ‘Muslim brothers’, which infuriated scholars like al-Jaabiree in Medina. *Shaikh* al-Jaabiree’s position was that the Houthi aggression necessitated *Jihaad*, and *Shaikh* al-*Imaam* had compromised the *da’wa*, and he even went as far as questioning his Islam, which has caused a major rift between the majority of *Salafee* scholars in Yemen and a few well-respected scholars in Medina. However, this researcher has been in contact with many students in Yemen and recently one returning from Yemen to Saudi Arabia, who stated that *Salafees* can teach and continue regular activities and are largely left alone by Houthis in the capital city where they focus their enmity towards institutes and mosques hosted by *Ikhwaan al-Muslimeen*. This illustrates the *maslaha* (benefit) and preservation of the *da’wa* that the Yemeni scholars were attempting to achieve. However, some of the most vocal critics of the truce comes from individuals like *Shaikh* Arafat al-Muhammadee who stated:

Previously I was asked about the Brotherhood and Living Together Pact, which was concluded between *Shaikh* Muhammad al-*Imaam* and the Houthi Rawaafidh (Shi’a). So I responded with what Ahlus *Sunnah*, the *Salafis* [sic], believe after consulting with the People of Knowledge. Then, while Ahlus *Sunnah* were waiting for *Shaikh* Muhammad to return (to the truth) and publicly declare it, he (instead) affirmed (the pact) ...And he was guiding the people to it! And he was enumerating its benefits! And he was praising the advantages of it.... (al-sughayyirah.files.wordpress.com 2015:5).

Shaikh Rabee’a al-Madkhalee claims, while acknowledging al-*Imaam*’s cognizance of the implications of the pact:

And he knows much about their deviance. And I believe that he knows the falsehood of this agreement – which does a disservice to the Sunna and its people and by which they are offended to the highest level, and which they reject with the greatest rejection, and which their enemies are pleased with and use it as a jumping off point to slander the *Salafis* [sic] in general and their aqeedah [sic] and manhaj so that they have begun to accuse them of having brotherhood with the shi’a. And they have declared

Muhammad al Imaam a disbeliever due to this pact and they have started to insinuate takfeer [sic] of the Salafis [sic] due to it (al-sughayyirah.files.wordpress.com 2015:3).

Shaikh al-Jaabiree states, “So the question here is: how could the brother Muhammad sign this oppressive, sinful pact while this pact maintains that the Houthis are Muslims, believers, as they have published in their pact the statement of the Most High, ‘Only the Believers are brothers’” (al-Sughayyirah.files.wordpress.com 2015:5).

All of these scholars are aware of the concept of being forced as a principle that prohibits making *takfeer* of an individual (Green 2009). Allah states, “Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief, except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with faith; but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a great torment” (1996 16:106). Ibn Katheer explains, “The scholars agree that it is permissible to display love for disbelief while the heart remains upon (faith)” (cited in al-Rehailee 2008:261). Also, Ibn ‘Arabee (explainer of Qur’an), states, “As for disbelief in Allah, then this is permissible for him: one who is forced to utter disbelief and there is no disagreement about this, with the condition that his heart is firm in faith” (cited in Sinaanee 2016:211). It appears that al-Imaam was not given the benefit of the doubt for sharing the *Salafee manhaj*, and previously authoring books that refuted the *Shia* creed and Houthi movement. Perhaps a greater appreciation and critical analysis of the circumstances he was faced with may have allowed his critics to envision the greater benefit achieved by signing the pact. Even his critics admitted they are aware that he knows the falsehood of the pact, but instead they do not evaluate this perceived error considering his general well-known established position regarding the Houthis. Some of the major *Salafee* scholars have acknowledged that the scholars of Yemen know best their situation and view the *fatwa*, and language contained therein in light of this fact. These differences over practical application of a rudimentary *Salafee* position illustrates how *ijtihad* over contemporary issues differs from scholar to scholar, but it does not always have to result in divisions, but

unfortunately this sometimes is the case.⁷⁶

Wiktorowicz's Typology

Although divisions do occur between groups of *Salafees*, like in the case of the Yemeni scholars, *Salafees* can never acquiesce to the idea that *Salafism* is multi-stranded, instead they see themselves and their movement as unified and that one is either a *Salafee* or non-*Salafee*. The primary reason why the concept of a *Salafee* typology is unacceptable to *Salafees* is because fragmentation calls into question *Salafee* claims of orthodoxy, legitimacy, and authenticity. To *Salafees* the diverse political discourse and outcomes of that discourse, between groups that are classified as *Salafee* by their critics does not translate to a common *manhaj* as was demonstrated in chapter one.

Nevertheless, one of the most renowned academic proponents of this view is Quintan Wiktorowicz whose classification of *Salafism* has been cited by numerous academics since its publication. When referring to the methodology of *Salafees*, Wiktorowicz states, “Salafis [*sic*] like to approach the process of applying religious principles to contemporary issues and problems as though it is a scientific enterprise governed by the hard laws of nature (in this case divinity)” (2005:8).

One of the main criticisms of Wiktorowicz's view is that it does not accurately describe *Salafism* as a movement and is an overgeneralization that includes political trends universally rejected by *Salafees* because of contradictions in methodology and key core principles. The criterion and conditions for determining whether one is *Salafee* or not, are detailed extensively in *Salafee* literature; however, many academics seem to associate diverse actors with the *Salafee manhaj* as a result of being unaware of these criterion. Wiktorowicz's work is often

⁷⁶ *Ijtihad* refers to the rigorous effort of a scholar of jurisprudence to obtain a *sharee'a* ruling based upon conviction or certainty. This should not be confused with the concept of *bid'a*, which often contradicts an established text by innovating a belief or action of worship. *Ijtihad* is in areas that were not explicit in the divine texts.

referenced due to its early analysis of *Salafism* after the September 11th terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York. After that event, academics, governments, and intelligence agencies began to research and scrutinize groups like al-Qaeda, and the broad consensus amongst Western academics pointed to *Salafism* as the ideology behind this new strain of radicalism. A synopsis of Wiktorowicz's argument is that *Salafees* make up a diverse community of political and apolitical actors who hold various views regarding issues such as *takfeer*, *jihaad*, issues regarding jurisprudence, and that they are incredibly fragmented with issues of intercommunity and intracommunity conflict. Wiktorowicz like many of his successors holds that what separates violent political actors from apolitical ones has more to do with interpretive discourse and contextualization of the core Islamic texts, than belief and *manhaj*.

As was previously mentioned, according to Wiktorowicz's classification, *Salafees* can be divided into three branches: purists, politicos, and *Jihaadees*. This observation made by Wiktorowicz has been used by many academics to describe *Salafism* and its apparent schisms. "*Salafism* has one of the closest ideological resemblances to 'jihadi' [*sic*] discourses; hence the reason behind extremists' alleged subscription to the former" (Baker 2009:133). For the purpose of this research a comparison of the various theories of *Jihaad* has been discussed in chapters one and two and the concept of *takfeer* will now be looked at in accordance with Wiktorowicz's observations to analyze his evaluation of how some of the key strands apply the principles of *takfeer* according to his typology. Wiktorowicz mentions, "If all Salafis [*sic*] agreed that the Saudi rulers have replaced the sharia [*sic*], are not coerced, understand that they are being un-Islamic, and implement non-Islamic law because they no longer believe in Islam, they would unite in condemning them as apostates (although some would still weigh the consequences for Muslims and whether takfir [*sic*] would create a lesser or greater evil" (2005:25).

From Wiktorowicz's critiques two main issues become apparent: diversity in *Salafism* and differences in applicability of *takfeer*. According to Wiktorowicz *Salafees* are a diverse community divided into three categories: purists, politicos, and *jihaadists*. As been stated previously, this typology does not exist according to *Salafee* claims. Wiktorowicz's argument confirms that there is broad diversity on a wide range of issues between the groups he has designated as *Salafee*. Keeping that in mind, this divergence should be sufficient to recognize that these different approaches are in fact *manhaj* issues, making it implausible to classify these strands, as he asserts, in one category due to the many policy implications of doing so. Divergent tactics, and application of the principles of *Jihaad*, for instance, show that these groups even contain differing goals.

The second issue worth highlighting is Wiktorowicz's mention of principles of *takfeer*. There are two main observations that need scrutiny here: if the principles of *takfeer* were really the same then there should be similar outcomes, also, as a matter of methodology, *takfeerees* do not actually excuse those who misapply the *sharee'a* nor do they apply the same principles as *Salafees*, instead their understanding is that all governments are illegitimate except for the territories they govern. Baker, a *Salafee* academic, is critical of Wiktorowicz's typology questioning its validity as an instrument to categorize *Salafism*. He states, "To generally categorize them as belonging to one and the same group, each being situated at different ends of an imaginary spectrum is to obfuscate parameters between movements that have been polemical in their opposition to violent extremism and those seeking to justify it" (2009:138-139).

In Defense of the *Salafee Manhaj*

Salafees have found themselves on the defensive due to their numerous detractors and the association of *Salafism* with 'radical Islam'. Some of the more contemporary scholarship calls into question the previous assumptions made by many academics and the media that posits a direct link between *Salafism* and

extremist thought. Even some scholars and researchers have begun to counter those assumptions and offer different narratives and this research aims to be a part of that growing body of literature. Some of the more research-based approaches based on real world case studies show that *Salafism* can be a counter force to extremism. Baker concludes, “that the continuing usage of inaccurate terminologies and typologies to define and categorize Salafis [sic] and takfeeris [sic] as one and the same entity, serve only to isolate and stigmatize the former movement who have, thus far, proved among the more effective in countering the takfeeri [sic] ideology” (2009:17). Other studies suggest, like that of Lambert’s, that *Salafees* can be effective partners in combatting extremism. Contrary to the claims of critics “MCU offices assessed it to be misleading and counterproductive to endorse the stereotyping, profiling, and conflating of Salafis [sic] with al-Qaeda terrorism. The fact that al-Qaeda terrorists adapt and distort Salafi [sic] approaches to Islam does not mean that Salafis [sic] are implicitly linked to terrorism or extremism, still less that individual Salafis [sic] are likely to be terrorists or extremists” (Lambert 2013:32). Lambert chronicles the experience of the Muslim Contact Unit, a police initiative to establish partnerships with the Muslim community in London to deal with extremists in the UK. He concludes after numerous encounters with both *Takfeerees* and *Salafees* that *Salafism* is not a part of the problem, but rather can counter the extremist groups in both rhetoric and direct confrontation. Lambert’s practical experience in counter-terrorism shows that convoluting *Salafees* with extremists does very little to assist in counter-terrorism efforts, instead it can be counter-productive hampering efforts to build relationships with those best suited to challenge extremist ideology. After being posed the question, is Quietist *Salafism* the antidote to ISIS, Mubin Shaikh responded by mentioning moderates have little influence of legitimacy in the eyes of radicalized youth, so *Salafees*, who speak the language of the *Jihaadists*, can better counter them and provide them with more constructive alternatives to extremism (McCants and Shaikh 2015). Another academic, Farid Senzai, concurs with Shaikh’s analysis; however, he adds that intervention strategies by Western governments, especially, to modernize or secularize *Salafees* can play into the hands of extremists either serving to radicalize

Salafees or undermine their credibility (McCants and Senzai 2015). These approaches to counter-terrorism and extremism will be explored further in chapter four. Still others like Bokhari argue *Salafism* is fragmented and accepts Wiktorowicz's classification. He believes the *Jihaadists* like ISIS and al-Qaeda are outgrowths of un-Islamic behavior of the Saudi regime. He argues that basically the regimes actions have caused a split in *Salafism* with some Quietist's remaining loyal to the regime and the other major trend is the *Jihaadists* who choose to revolt and oppose the regime violently. In this synopsis, he argues that the electoral or politicians are best suited to counter *Jihaadists* if more democratically viable conditions become present in Arab states (McCants and Bokhari 2015).

Conclusion

In sum, the most damning criticism of *Salafism*, according to its modernist critics, is that it is built upon a myth of the glory of the past, fails to address the needs of the greater Muslim community, and looks to the past to solve contemporary problems and issues. These detractors of *Salafism* criticize *Salafees* for methodological reasons claiming that their methodology is antiquated and inept in addressing contemporary issues and the problems of modernism. According to these critics, this ineptitude results in stagnancy and a stifling of Muslim progress. *Salafees* counter argue that by looking to the past, Muslims can gain insight into the future and make use of past wisdom. Also, that by adhering to the past they are taking a more faith-based approach to the future: showing faith in Allah and the sacred texts, which provide evidence for their success. *Salafees* often cite the *hadeeth* in which the Prophet (saw) said, "There won't cease to be a group from my nation who remains on the truth until the hour is established" (Muslim 1999: 7/184). In addition, this methodology of approaching the future preserves the religion, *manhaj*, and principles of the *Salaf* from corruption and deviation from orthodoxy. There are stern warnings in both the Qur'an and *Sunna* admonishing the believers for following the way of the Jews and Christians, who according to the Qur'an, went astray and choose to follow their whims over orthodoxy (al-Tha'labee 2015:2/467).

Another argument advanced by critics of *Salafism* is that *Salafism* is the root of extremist *takfeeree* ideology, which exhorts its adherents to violence spawning groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS, and al-Shabaab. From the *Salafee* perspective, the critics have no merits as *Salafees* reject *takfeeree-jihaadee* ideology and differ in both *manhaj* and objectives. In addition, authentic *Salafee* communities do not produce, encourage, or recruit these types of individuals. Lambert's experience offers empirical evidence showing that *Salafees* can not only be a force to counter extremists, but also, in some cases be partners in counter terrorism efforts (2013).

Finally, this chapter surveyed some of the critics of *Salafism* and the arguments they advanced. This chapter also contained an analysis of Wiktorowicz's classification of *Salafism* into three categories and some of the implications of this categorization and observations regarding it. This was done to challenge existing conventions and models that constrain discourse around *Salafism* its exclusivity and propensity for violence. The chapter ended by chronicling some of the counter arguments of *Salafees* and found that their arguments generally addressed their critics' censures.

Chapter Four: *Salafee* Perceptions of Western Societies

Introduction

Democracy as a political system is highly contested by both Muslim and non-Muslim proponents. *Salafees*, to say the least, are highly suspicious of democracy and any political system that they perceive to be in contradiction to Islam. In addition, they are highly skeptical of the integrity of an electoral system. Al-'Uthaimeen states:

Those who call to democracy in the West and around the world do not implement it. They are liars! Even their elections involve rigging and deception. They only consider their whims important. In Islam, when the informed decision makers agree upon allegiance to an *Imaam*, then he becomes *Imaam* regardless of whether the laypersons agree or not (1998:2/148).

He further claims that by allowing mass participation people will always differ leading to discord, and that most people are neither duly informed nor capable of participating in the process of governance. Another argument advanced by *Salafee* scholars is that voting and democratic processes have no precedence in Islamic history. They claim voting contradicts the means of choosing a leader and Islamic governance. *Salafees*, as a rule, contest democracy citing that as a political system it is ruling by other than divine law, thus a gross violation of Allah's sovereignty, which in turn constitutes a type of disbelief (Green 2009). Al-'Uthaimeen's criticism of democracy is not simply a critique of the perceived corruption of democracy or its inadequate implementation, but rather an attack on its core tenets.

In this chapter *Salafees'* perception of democracy, pluralism, and how they perceive their role as Muslim minorities in Western countries will be explored. An often-cited characteristic of extremist ideology is that it is severely critical of democratic ideas and pluralism, which can cause academics and policy pundits to link *Salafees* with extremist thought and violent behavior. However, by examining *Salafee* critiques of these concepts and assessing their behavior in light of this premise, it is hoped to

highlight that despite *Salafees'* disdain for democracy as a system this does not translate into violent extremism or the increased propensity to commit violence. Democracy, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, is a terminology that denotes both an ideology and system, referring to a

universally recognized ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of...differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity (1998:8).

Democracy as a political system refers to a system that is responsive to the general will of the people. Some of the main characteristics or tenets of democracy being free and fair elections with the ability to choose and replace government, active participation of citizenry, human rights, and rule of law with individual protections (1998). It is believed that through the implementation of democracy and the reinforcement of its institutions that certain liberties will be protected resulting in the consent of the governed, responsive leaders, and minorities being protected equally under the law. In addition, the citizenry of a democratic state should be allowed free thought, religious freedom, and freedom of the press. Beetham observes in the Inter-Parliamentary Union report, that "what justifies our calling these institutions democratic is not merely a matter of convention, but of the contribution they make to the realization of these underlying principles" (1998:33). Based upon these principles it is easy to see why *Salafee* scholars might reject democracy due to their literalist conservative approach to the divine texts and rejection of any ideas that they perceive as un-Islamic. The United Nations Economic Social Council states that democracy:

in its ideal sense is the notion that 'the people' should have control of the government ruling over them. This ideal is pursued by implementing a system of voting such that the majority of people rule, either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. Democracies may be 'liberal', where fundamental rights of individuals in the minority are protected by law, or they may be 'illiberal' where they are not. Democracy is often implemented as a form of government in which

policy is decided by the preference of the real majority (as opposed to a partial or relative majority of the demos/citizens) in a decision-making process, usually elections or referenda, open to all” (2006:1).

The rationale for analyzing the concept of a liberal democracy in this research as opposed to the variant models of democratic states is because the parameters of this research primarily deal with the experiences of Muslim minorities in Western democracies, more specifically Muslims in the UK and United States.

Islam and Democracy

Muslim proponents of democracy cite a variety of different arguments to substantiate democracy, from *shuraa* (consultation), to broad principles of justice and respect for human dignity as espoused in the Qur'an. However, many Muslim proponents of democracy do acknowledge that there are inherent tensions within the merger of these two systems. El Fadl details the conundrum posed by democracy as a system in contrast to the *sharee'a* system by stating:

For Islam, democracy poses a formidable challenge. Muslim jurists have argued that law made by a sovereign monarch is illegitimate because it substitutes human authority for God's sovereignty. But law made by sovereign citizens faces the same problem of legitimacy. In Islam, God is the only sovereign and the ultimate source of legitimate law. How, then, can a democratic conception of the people's authority be reconciled with an Islamic understanding of God's authority? (2004:4).

El Fadl believes that reconciling these fundamental tensions requires vision, and the will power of Muslims moral commitment to reexamine the texts for contemporary solutions. These assertions of El Fadl are built upon the less restrictive interpretive discourse used by moderates and progressives, and their efforts to contextualize and deconstruct the divine texts to open the possibility of democracy or a democratic system within Islamic constructs. He states, “But Muslims, for whom Islam is the authoritative frame of reference, can arrive at the conviction that democracy is an ethical good, and that the pursuit of this good does not require abandoning Islam” (2004:5). This highlights the acknowledged tension

between the two systems. Furthermore, it suggests El Fadl's very liberal approach to the Qur'an, which as a method is much more accommodating than the literalist interpretation; however, in this researcher's view, as a methodology it departs from orthodoxy and the intended meaning of the divine texts. Esposito and Voll also acknowledge the tensions of Islamic heritage and democracy. "The two processes are contradictory and competitive only if 'democracy' is defined in a highly restricted way and is viewed as possible only if specific Western European or American institutions are adopted, or if important Islamic principles are defined in a rigid and traditional manner" (1996:21). Essentially, Esposito and Voll are claiming that due to underlying contradictions between an Islamic state and a democratic one it requires altering Islamic interpretive discourse to accommodate democratic tenets. Even the most ardent Muslim proponents of democracy acknowledge this tension to some degree. El Fadl states in his endorsement for democracy:

Although Muslim jurists debated political systems, the Qur'an itself does not specify a particular form of government. But it does identify a set of social and political values that are central to a Muslim polity. Three values are of particular importance: pursuing justice through social cooperation, and mutual assistance (49:13, 11:119); establishing non-autocratic consultative method of governance; and institutionalizing mercy and compassion in social interactions (6:12, 6:54, 21:107, 27:77, 29:77, 29:51, 45:20). So all else being equal, Muslims today ought to endorse the form of government that is most effective in helping them promote these values (2004:5).

Most modernists approach Islam and the sacred texts with very broad-based analysis highlighting general precepts and moral values from the Qur'an. One problem with this approach is it ignores many specific texts in preference to general tenets, thus ignoring the real intent and definitions detailed by those specific texts. For example, under the guise of pursuing justice through social cooperation some modernists justify interfaith worship services and mutual proselytizing. Others believe that cooperation with non-Muslims does not require compromising religious tenets, but rather emphasizing commonalities (El Fadl 2005). *Salafees*, on the other hand, consider this to be an unequivocal violation of *al-wala'a wa al-bara'a*, a prerequisite of *tawheed*, thus denoting disbelief. This is just one illustration of the

extreme dichotomy in interpretive discourse and methodological dissimilarities between *Salafees* and modernists showing how varying paradigms lead to vastly different understandings of Islam. El Fadl in his attempt to reconcile Islam and democracy states:

the values that emerge from the classical tradition, such as dignity, liberty, the five protected interests, and the discourse against subjugation and oppression, can be translated into a coherent set of human rights for the modern age that emerge as natural extensions of the Islamic heritage. These rights would bolster the principle of democracy in Islam (2007:190).

Even in the realm of *fiqh* modernists “search for lenient decisions that accommodate the challenges Muslim minorities face, as well as the elevation of individual needs to the rank of necessities and the broadening of the list of primary objectives of the *shari’a* [sic], which made it possible for *wasitis* [sic] to formulate lenient decisions with a *shari’* [sic] framework” (Shavit 2015:8).⁷⁷ This is not to suggest that *Salafees* do not seek to accommodate the needs of Muslim minorities; however, their approach is very restricted due to the constraints of literalism and maintaining what they perceive to be orthodoxy. The position taken by *Salafees* and more conservative adherents to Islam is one of general hostility towards democracy especially when it is imposed upon Muslim societies. In sum, *Salafees* see democracy as a post-colonial tool used to subjugate Muslims and change the Islamic creed by introducing secularism.

Within the Muslim world, conservative Muslim thinkers argued that Islam and democracy were incompatible, because of first, the Islamic concept of the absolute sovereignty of God – they believed that ideas of the sovereignty of the people in a democracy contradicted this fundamental principle; second, in Islam the law was defined and promulgated by God and that God's law, the *shari’a* [sic], could not be altered by elected parliaments; and third, the concept of parliaments as sources of law was seen as blasphemous (Voll 2007:3).

⁷⁷ The term *wasiti* is used by Shavit to reference a modernist as opposed to a literalist.

Another argument advanced by critics of 'Islamic democracy' and the use of general texts to accommodate new ideologies and systems is that of Muhammad Qutb, the brother of the Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Syed Qutb. Qutb states:

The Muslims understood from the first moment that the revelation was cut off at the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him)-that they must strive in order to face new forthcoming circumstances in which no specific text from the Qur'an and Sunnah [*sic*] was sent down for. And that did not make them restless nor did they stand confused in front of those realities and at the same time they did not follow their desires uncontrolled in search of what they deem-simply based upon desires-to be *maslaha* (interest) in which through good is achieved. That is because they firstly believed that the religion of Allah represented in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah [*sic*] of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is the absolute truth, and that is justice, and that it is the true *maslaha* in this world and in the hereafter, and that in it solely guidance is found. Either through an explicit text or through a principle drawn from it (Qutb 1994:160).

Qutb alludes to the fact that compromise of core Islamic principles under the guise of attaining general benefit is unacceptable. In addition, by abstracting broad principles that are espoused in the Qur'an, even universally accepted ones, should not contradict core Islamic ethics. For example, many modernists use concepts like justice, cooperation, and freedom, all universally admirable principles, to support the compatibility of Islam and liberal democracy. However, in the view of more traditional Muslims these values are defined and contextualized in the *sharee'a* by returning to the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and classical interpretations. Although Qutb was not *Salafee*, *Salafee* scholars share his concerns and arguments for rejecting democracy.

In contrast, some moderates even claim that Islamic consensus is synonymous with democracy and that Islam demands a constitutional form of government based upon *sharee'a*. Other so-called moderates even call for full democracy without *sharee'a* constraints. They claim, "God has delegated total authority to human beings to conduct their affairs according to their free will. God retains the right to reward or punish..." (2007:194). Much of El Fadl's argument relies upon rationalism

and philosophical discourse, a radical departure from the *Salafee* view of literalism. According to El Fadl, some modernists argue “God is sovereign as far as the eternal law is concerned. Since the duty of human beings is to manage human law, and not external law, human beings are free to legislate as long as the legislation attempts to fulfill the eternal law” (2007:194). The proponents of this view concern themselves with overall general tenets of the *sharee’a*; however, this approach appears to neglect much of the specific texts that challenge, and even contradict their narrative.

After analyzing various approaches to *sharee’a* implementation as advocated by moderates, El Fadl concludes, “that they all reject theocratic forms of government, and to various extents, they reject a model in which the state exists to enforce a Divine code of laws that is beyond human accountability of change... (moderates) believe that God speaks to the hearts of people, not their institutions” (2007:196). Institutions cannot represent the will of Allah according to those secularists; rather His will is articulated by the practice of the individual. On the contrary, *Salafees* emphasize that those institutions are a part of Allah’s will and are there to support and strengthen both individual and society in accordance with *sharee’a* objectives.

To illustrate the differences in approach between the modernists and *Salafees* we look at the modernists’ presumptions. Modernists presume that all human beings have a right to dignity, liberty and that oppression is offensive to Allah. *Salafees*, on the other hand, argue that those precepts are to be defined and outlined within the context of the *sharee’a*. For example, *Salafees* assert that true dignity emanates from faith, and liberty is not an absolute concept. Therefore, Islamic law and institutions restrict freedoms. Moreover, moderates and *Salafees* both concur that the Qur’an denounces oppression in the strongest terms; however, what Allah deems oppressive may not always coincide with man’s view. Due to an absence of a common definition of what constitutes oppression and tyranny *Salafees* and moderates arrive at divergent concepts of justice. El Fadl condemns theocracy as tyrannous, he states, “Importantly, the Qur’an soundly condemns this kind of

despotism and whimsical exercise of power and advises Muslims either to resist it, or if they are incapable of doing so, to desert such oppressive lands by migrating to countries that are more just and equitable” (2007:184). El Fadl’s statement suggests that modernists are not bound by the methodology of the *Salaf*, because after the Qur’an their main source of reference is their logic. Secondly, they use contemporary understandings of justice, and liberty instead of Qur’anic precepts. Thirdly, they interpret the divine texts in an unorthodox manner by justifying rebellion to change tyranny opposing the specific divine texts, *hadeeth*, and the narrations of the *Salaf*. They also justify *hijra* to non-Muslim lands under the guise of fleeing oppression correlating the experience of refugees and asylum seekers to the first *hijra* to Ethiopia, a Christian kingdom. Some evidence suggests that a number of Muslim migrants to the West tend to be economically stable and well educated in their home country simply looking to forge new opportunities in the West (cis.org).

In contrast, moderates contend that the *Salafee* approach to statehood is not in accordance with Allah’s will, but rather a man-made system usurping Allah’s sovereignty by enforcing a purist vision without spiritual substance. This is their response to literalist conceptions of statehood that criticize democracy. “Importantly, moderates believe that Godliness cannot be achieved by a state commanding it to be so. Thus, when the state plays the role of an enforcer for God, the state ends up replacing God altogether, and this is an absolute absence of Godliness” (2007:196). This rather bold claim by El Fadl does not really give the correct synopsis of the *Salafee* approach to the state. For instance, *Salafees* make the argument that the state and its institutions are in place to strengthen the overall society and the individual in their quest for God fearfulness. Moreover, *Salafees* hold that those institutions serve both as the means to carry out Allah’s will and are mandated by revelation. For example, the establishment of prayer is mentioned as reported in Muslim, as one of the criterion for preventing revolution against a tyrannical leader (2000). This means that there is Islamic precedence for institutionalizing the enforcement of prayer, which falls upon both the individual and the state.

There are immense differences between *Salafees* and moderates regarding issues ranging from creed, *manhaj*, politics, and subsidiary issues, all giving rise to hostilities between them. *Shaikh* A'aidh al-Shamree states about Saudi liberals and moderates:

It is impossible for them to credit *Salafees* in their books, even though they know *Salafees* are the ones who oppose *takfeerees* and terrorists, and counter anyone who poses a threat to security in their country, and they call people to preserve the oath of allegiance... However, they never praise the *Salafees* because they oppose them in politics, creed, and legislation (2016:28).

The liberals *Shaikh* al-Shamree referred to were predominantly those who were oriented towards *Ikhwaan al-Muslimeen* in *manhaj*, and liberal socially, not pure secularists whom *Salafees* view as apostates. This highlights how individuals and groups both vary with regards to their understanding and practice. Therefore, a person or groups can have an eclectic *manhaj* making it difficult to ascribe them to one group or another. The *Shaikh* is pointing out how these divergent trends share some foundational principles of the Muslim Brotherhood in methodology, but tend to be more liberal on social issues.

Paradigm shift:

The contemporary rhetoric and current political climate has challenged many leaders across the ideological spectrum creating a push from regimes normally associated with authoritarianism to consider reforms more in line with democracy. There has been a noticeable shift in the rhetoric of many regimes that normally allow limited if any representation of their political constituencies, or do not tolerate opposition. Some have even responded by moving towards limited reforms offering more participation in the public sphere. Esposito and Voll observe, "The demand and desire for democracy is widespread in contemporary global affairs. Few major political leaders or movements describe themselves as 'anti-democratic'" (1996:11). Due to this paradigm shift and push towards Western democratization, politically it

becomes unacceptable for some regimes not to recognize the demand for political reforms and pushes for more empowerment in this post-digital age. An example of pressures put on existing political systems and regimes is the 'Arab Spring' and the demand for more political space and reform. Much of the protest and call for democratization was organized through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Whole regimes were changed in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and now Sudan, as a result, in part, due to mass mobilization demanding political reform. "Democratization is the demand for empowerment in government and politics made by a growing portion of populations around the world" (Esposito and Voll 1996:13). The push for socio-political change is even felt in countries like Saudi Arabia. The new leadership has taken a variety of steps to channel the pressures of the burgeoning youth crisis and placate potential political upheaval. By introducing several controversial reforms like the introduction of women into the *Shura* council, lifting the ban on women driving, and various proposals to open entertainment and tourist facilities it appears to some observers that there is a deliberate move to liberalize the society driven by new economic realities. In addition, there is a new challenge to the clerical establishment and a move away from traditional morays and a weakening of institutions *Salafee* clerics have for so long depended upon. These changes have not gone unchallenged, as some well-known *Salafee* scholars have openly expressed in writings their opposition to some of these initiatives, while at the same time maintaining respect and allegiance to the Saudi government.

***Salafee* Perspective**

To illustrate the *Salafee* disdain for democracy it is imperative to analyze some of their sermons and statements. *Shaikh* Saalih bin al-Fawzaan was asked about the Buddhist genocide of Rohingya Muslims currently taking place in Myanmar. He replied by saying not only is this war being waged against Muslims there, but in fact all over the world. He then proceeded to lambast democracy stating, "They call this democracy, when they enforce this ideology and system of disbelief upon us. This

is democracy and secularism” (www.alfawzan.net). It is not entirely clear why al-Fawzaan answered by referencing democracy when asked about the Rohingya, but his statement demonstrates that leading *Salafee* clerics view democracy as imposing and hostile towards Islam. Democracy is seen as a foreign imperialistic system that is often forcibly administered against Muslim governments and populations with the aim of secularizing Muslim societies and rendering Islam impotent as a global power. The *Shaikh*’s response further indicates that *Salafees*, in general, are unwilling to engage democratic ideas and principles as they view them only in conspiratorial terms. In a high percentage of the *Salafee* lectures surveyed for this study the researcher found that lectures mentioning democracy, mostly referred to democracy as an ideology that simply refers to majority rule and connotes a threat to Allah’s sovereignty (Green 2009). This evidence suggests *Salafee* scholars have a very univocal view of democracy and do not deem it necessary to engage its tenets through analysis as they view it as unequivocally heresy. *Shaikh* al-Waadi’ee mentions that voting specifically is an idolatrous practice that allows the informed and uninformed equal voice in determining the leader. He states, “Obtaining a leader is through God fearfulness, knowledge, good deeds, and *da’wa* to Allah, and preparation as much as possible” (1994:17). *Shaikh* al- ‘Abbaad states, “Obtaining a leader in a so-called democratic system is built on political partisanship... and those who obtain the most votes are put forward. This institution contradicts Islam and is imported by some Muslims from the enemies of Islam” (2004:87). *Salafees* criticize the authenticity of democracy and highlight the fact that many democratic societies in the West exalt values such as freedom and equality, but in fact have an abhorrent track record when it comes to minority rights and institutionalized racism. In accordance with *Salafees*’ disdain for *hizbeeya* and blind partisanship it is no wonder that they detest democracy or any political system, which encourages rivalry, or competing political interests that may oppose Islamic objectives.

Pluralism

Pluralism as a term denotes different meanings depending on the context it refers to. Essentially classical pluralism refers to the political process of competing interest groups ability to influence a given society's policies and its allocation of resources, which are important components of a democratic system. In principle, Muslim minorities living in democratic societies benefit from the freedoms in such a system and are largely left alone to practice and propagate their faith and take a more political role in society if they so choose. Therefore, in a democratic society, due to its pluralistic nature, Muslims both *Salafees* and non-*Salafees* benefit from the liberties afforded them, even if some groups in principle do not support such a system. Under these circumstances, *Salafees* are more concerned with religious purity and the concept of religious pluralism as it relates within the Islamic faith: diverse groups competing for influence and defining the nature and priorities of the *da'wa*. Therefore, pluralism as it relates to religion refers to how diverse religions or denominations interact and coexist with one another in society. Some definitions include that this requires more than tolerance of other faiths, but even the acknowledgement of other truths. As was stated previously, *Salafees* have little tolerance for intra-religious pluralism. For them this type of pluralism challenges orthodoxy and core religious texts, which clearly reject the plurality of belief, so for *Salafees*, religious pluralism constitutes a violation of the core religious objective of unity, because in their view, unity can only be substantiated if it is based upon a common creed and methodology. Nevertheless, others make the argument that:

intra-religious pluralism is certainly consistent with Islam and the Qu'ran – at least in principle. No Muslim sects are defined in the Qur'an because, as is well known, the division into Sunni and Shia sects came about roughly 25 years after the death of the Holy Prophet and was occasioned by the issue of succession to the caliphate. Muslims can therefore legitimately argue that there is no room for sectarian conflict in pristine Islam (Hoodbhoy 2011:3).

In view of what has preceded, the researcher suggests that *Salafees* reject religious pluralism within the Islamic faith as they equate it with *hizbeeya* and conclude that it

is harmful to the purity of Islam. Moreover, *Salafees* see pluralism as a threat to a unified creed, a challenge to their narrative, and an overall aberration in the religion. Nevertheless, critics of *Salafism* like El Fadl claim, “the Qur’an does not completely exclude the possibility that there might be other paths to salvation. One component of this issue has to do with who might be entitled to God’s mercy.... In fact, the Qur’an expresses indignation at those who attempt to limit or apportion God’s mercy according to their wills or desires” (El Fadl 2007:216).⁷⁸ The modernist perspective is that pluralism challenges stagnant ideas, encourages communal growth in keeping with the times, by illustrating the inherent fluidity of Islam. *Salafees* counter by demonstrating that Allah has made this distinction of who is deserving of His mercy and wrath. All throughout the Qur’an and *Sunna* there are verses and texts that unequivocally state that salvation comes through being a believer in Islam and that no other faith after the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) would be acceptable to Allah. However, with that being the case there is no suggestion that *Salafees*’ intolerance for intra-religious sectarianism leads to violence or violent behaviors, rather they restrict their resistance to partisanship to polemical debates. Furthermore, as the literature suggests there are ample examples in hadeeth literature that illustrate that sectarianism would be a challenge to orthodoxy after the death of the Prophet (saw). On the other hand, “moderates argue that the Qur’an not only accepts, but even expects, the reality of difference and diversity within human society” (Al Fadl 2007:207). This claim seems to be inconsistent with the specific texts that *Salafees* often quote and the plethora of classical texts, which denounce sectarianism and religious heresy. El Fadl counters by stating, “Another intriguing aspect of the Qur’anic discourse is that it recognizes that plural religious convictions and laws might be legitimate” (2007:216). Recognizing the differences in textual analysis and interpretation is critical to understanding the vast array of opinions and rulings the various groups extrapolate

⁷⁸ As mentioned previously, statements like these by progressives underscores their willingness to engage or even accept that there are potentially other paths to salvation, or spiritual inspiration, whether it be from Rastafarians like Bob Marley or entertainers like Bob Dylan (Safi 2003). This is the antithesis to the *Salafee* paradigm, and in fact most Muslims, and for *Salafees* these notions constitute heresy.

from the divine texts. The varying stances to pluralism taken by *Salafees* and moderates further illustrate how dissimilar their paradigms are.

Secularism

Aside from pluralism, another challenge posed by Western democracies for Muslim minorities is secularism. Western democracies differ with regards to their policies towards religion, tolerance, and multiculturalism. One example of a Western democratic country that enforces an aggressive policy of assimilation is France. Assimilation is a key pillar of French democracy and political culture as well as a part of its colonial legacy. France is also staunchly secular, tolerating religion only in the private sphere citing national cohesion as a more important objective than maintaining individual and religious identities. “Outside France, this very offensive and militant *laïcité* is perceived as excessive, and even undemocratic since it violates individual freedom” (Roy 2007: xiii). Although the US and many Western countries critique the French model, evidence suggests many of the same countries are discarding the model of multiculturalism and see it as a failure. These same democracies are reassessing their immigration policies, rolling back freedoms, and reanalyzing the French approach (Roy 2007). The rise in *Islamaphobia* and relative inaction by some Western governments to debunk or pacify these trends has made Muslim minorities the target of violent hate crimes in many Western countries. The lack of willingness for many to challenge these ideas has also led to the scapegoating of *Salafees* (Roy 2007).

Secularism is the belief that religion should have no role in the public domain and should be relegated to the personal sphere. Most Muslims believe that secularism is fundamentally incompatible with Islam and that Islam is a complete way of life that governs the public and private sphere.⁷⁹ *Salafees* believe secularism is the

⁷⁹ In accordance with the findings of this research modernists seek to reform Islamic institutions to fit contemporary times and circumstances, whereas secularists regulate religion to the private sphere. According to this premise most secularists are modernist; however, modernists may not necessarily be secular.

antithesis to Islam. *Salafee* scholars often lecture about the importance of Islamic law and values being implemented throughout all aspects of society, whereas secularism seeks to divorce religion from the public sphere. *Salafees* view secularism as one of the most dangerous modern ideologies to confront Islam and a logical extension of democracy. As was mentioned previously, *Salafees* believe the system of democracy, and in fact any non-Islamic system, is an affront to Allah's sovereignty undermining the function of Islamic institutions by relegating religion to the private sphere. This, however, is not unique to *Salafees*. Many other Islamic movements that contain a political orientation also view democracy as a threat and usurpation of Allah's judgment and authority. In contrast, there are Muslims who advocate for a more secularist approach to Islam and for assimilation into Western society. Bernard asserts that the modernists approach to comprehending and interpreting Islam is much more compatible with Western democratic values and the West's experience. "Modernism, not traditionalism, is what worked for the West. This included the necessity to depart from, modify, and selectively ignore elements of the original religious doctrine" (2003:37). From a *Salafee* perspective to neglect core aspects and tenets of the faith is tantamount to disbelief and heresy at the least.

Bernard insists:

The Old Testament is not different from the Qur'an in endorsing conduct and containing a number of rules and values that are literally unthinkable, not to mention illegal, in today's society. This does not pose a problem because few people would today insist that we should all be living in the exact literal manner of the Biblical patriarchs. Instead, we allow our vision of Judaism's or Christianity's true message to dominate over the literal text, which we regard as history and legend. That is exactly the approach that Islamic modernists also propose" (2003:37).

Muslim Minorities

Salafees as Muslim minorities face a whole series of different problems and challenges as compared to their counterparts living in a Muslim country. "The

experience of everyday life as a minority brings Muslims to develop practices, compromises, and considerations meant to cope with secularism that imposes itself on them” (Roy 2007: ix). Some examples of common challenges faced by Muslims in the West are social decadence, non-Muslim relatives that can exert pressures upon converts to revert from Islam, and un-Islamic environments that at times may pose challenges or even become hostile toward Islam.

An additional challenge for Muslims in the West is that many Western societies have shifted towards a policy of promoting a “moderate Islam” which is an externally imposed reconstruction of the Islamic faith. These same governments, and those who advocate such policies, define what is considered extremist, fundamentalist, and what practices are considered unacceptable, and in turn control the debate about Islam and its place in Western society.

The denunciation of Muslim fundamentalism thus masks other targets and other stakes. The label of ‘fundamentalism’, which is very useful for polemics, is applied from the outside. When Muslims are called on to adopt a reformed and liberal Islam, they are expected to situate themselves in relation to analytical framework that has been prepared for them without asking questions about the meaning of their practices and the nature of choices involving their identity (Roy 2007:4).

By framing Islamic activism or strict adherents of the faith as fundamentalists or extremists the media and policy pundits control the narrative and limit both the spectrum and religious activities of Muslim minorities. Some examples might be the imposition or restriction of certain dress like the *hijab* in the public sphere or the condemnation of polygamy. Both practices and the practitioners of such rituals then move from being ostracized to becoming symbols of oppression and backwardness and labeled as extremist, thus furthering their move to being banned altogether with the state moving into the private religious sphere. Some in the West even advocate an aggressive policy of divide and conquer to antagonize and oppose the fundamentalists while at the same time supporting direct policies to encourage and assist secularists. Bernard advocates discrimination between the various groups by encouraging “those with a greater affinity to modernism, such as the Hanafi [sic] law

school, versus others. Encourage them to issue religious opinions and popularize these to weaken the authority of backward Wahhabi-inspired [sic] religious rulings... (also) encourage the popularity and acceptance of Sufism" (Benard 2003: xii). Bernard supports aggressively promoting a more secularized Islam, discrediting those who are perceived as extremists, and exacerbating internal sectarian rivalries to advance a more democratic Islam that is supportive of Western interests. Even though there is a push to secularize Muslims in the West. Most Muslims residing there already find it more expedient to assimilate to a greater or lesser extent to Western norms. Roy concludes:

That even fundamentalism has at bottom incorporated the religious space of the West (individualism, separation between politics and religion) and is striving to promote its conservative, indeed reactionary, values in a discourse and practice that mirror those of Christian and Jewish conservatives (2007:102).

Salafees view themselves as an insular community within the broader society. They define themselves and their culture independently of the West, while at the same time functioning within the society's parameters. Roy observes:

But the problem lies precisely there: detached from any territory, devoid of cultural identity, and global, neo-fundamentalism is outside the arena of the state... (They) ask for nothing positive from the state, except abstention: let us wear the veil, eat *hallaal* [sic], not shake hands, and so on. They are absent from the great debates about society because they legitimate for themselves, not for society" (2007:76).

While Roy's analysis speaks true of some Muslim minorities in the West, especially *Salafees* and other groups that take a more literalist approach, it also resonates with the experience of *Salafees* in more pluralistic Muslim societies. For instance, *Salafees* in Yemen also willfully detach themselves from the rest of society and see their role as predominately reforming the society's social ills and beliefs, with minimal concern given to issues of governance in the society, especially with regards to pursuing leadership roles or coups. *Shaikh* al-Waadi'ee explicates the *da'wa* of the *Salafees* in Yemen when he states, "We do not believe in rebelling

against the Muslim rulers as long as they are Muslims, and we do not consider revolutions as means of reform, but rather societal havoc” (2005:65-66). Due to the pluralistic nature of these societies, *Salafees* find that they must adapt their positions without compromising their *manhaj*, they recognize that they must evaluate the various levels of deterring harmful sinful practices in the society by encouraging the good practices through *da’wa* activities and preaching, again *Shaikh* al-Waadi’ee states:

The position of *Ahl al-Sunna* regarding the government is that whatever disagrees with the Book of Allah and the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah (saw) we reject it. Some of the things, but not restricted to, are women’s nakedness, mixing in society and the university, banks dealing in interest, taxation and custom duties. However, we believe in obedience to the government” (2014:28).

What is of interest here is that although al-Waadi’ee acknowledged that sinfulness and practices inconsistent with Islam had become rampant in the society he did not call for rebellion, excommunication of the leaders, nor attempting to violently enforce the *Salafee* morays upon society, rather his view held that societal rectification would come about through *da’wa*. In a society where Muslims are in the minority “they recognize the secularization of the public square, but they want to take their place in it as religious beings. Rather than a conquest of society, this is a form of privatization of public space” (Roy 2007:81). This analysis captures the relationship of *Salafees* to a secular society: they remain within the legal framework of the society and reformulate their orientation to fit the Western framework. Many *Salafees* will argue that although they may have to reformulate their positions that they do not have to compromise their *manhaj*. They argue *Salafism* is resilient and so long as foundation principles of creed and *manhaj* are not threatened and forced to compromise they can function in a society that does not limit their ability to propagate Islam. Obviously, this is not the ideal situation for *Salafees* and as chapter one demonstrated tension can arise due to conflicts promulgating from the premises of *al-wala’a wa al-bara’a*. *Salafees* claim that *Salafism* is orthodox Islam, so that no matter the circumstances that arise *Salafism* offers a solution and is

adaptable to any circumstances. For example, principles of selecting the greater of two evils or weighing the harms and benefits can be applied under all circumstances and this general claim is similar to what the modernists believe.⁸⁰ However, many modernists are willing to assimilate and compromise Islamic tenets to integrate into Western societies under the guise of general *sharee'a* objectives. *Salafees* on the other hand believe the specific texts contained within the Qur'an and *Sunna* impede and restrict those same principles. Classical scholars understood the divine texts, their maxims, and formulated their foundation principles from the Qur'an and *Sunna*, while abstracting inclusive *sharee'a* based objectives from those core texts. Progressives, on the other hand, make those *sharee'a* based objectives their foundation, which they use to judge, and at times disregard specific texts, in order to implement their reformist agenda.

***Fiqh* For Muslim Minorities**

With more and more Muslims residing in non-Muslim societies a whole new body of literature has arisen attempting to address the diverse needs and situations that Muslims face. Modernists have probably been the most attentive to these new challenges as many of them reside in the West. Shavit states, "the *wasatiyya* [*sic*] approach calls for adapting religious laws to changing times and circumstance in a way that would make the lives of Muslims easier and Islam more attractive" (2015:18). The modernist or *wasati* approach can be summarized as being gradualists, reform minded, by using general Qur'anic principles and minimal usage of primary *hadeeth* texts. Their emphasis is upon the spirit and objectives of Islam with consideration of what they perceive as the harms and benefits (Shavit 2015). Modernists and other reform minded Muslims tend to emphasize general *sharee'a* based objectives to legitimize democracy, unlimited freedom, pluralism, and accommodating new juristic challenges in the West under the guise of *fiqh al-*

⁸⁰ "*Wasatiyya* [*sic*] is a continuation of the modernist-apologetic school established by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-7), Mohammed 'Abduh (1849-1905), and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935), particularly in its quest to provide an Islamic context to modern concepts and institutions and allow their conditional, mitigated interpretation into Muslim societies... it is a continuation of the Islamist project led by Hassan al-Banna" (Shavit 2015:17).

muwazanat (balanced jurisprudence). *Salafees*, on the other hand, claim that this methodology is too broad and accommodating allowing for implementation of un-Islamic legislation by sacrificing established *sharee'a* norms and sanctioning specifically prohibited practices under the guise of obtaining some general benefit. For *Salafees* “removing difficulties and ease within Islam ... are not goals within themselves. Instead they are means to fulfill the commands of Allah” (Hameed 2016:12). This approach to removing difficulties does not allow for compromising specific tenets or texts to achieve overall aims, especially if those objectives have been detailed and defined in accordance with the *sharee'a*. For instance, modernists might claim that because the Qur'an exhorts believers to be just and justice is one of the divine attributes of Allah, that any system or law that upholds, what they perceive as, justice is therefore Islamic or at least compatible with Islam. To further illustrate just how different moderates perceive divine will and *sharee'a* objectives El Fadl states:

The fact that God has willed that people remain different, the moderates argue, illustrates god's respect for human free will and also mandates that human beings recognize the virtue of tolerance, since diversity is a part of the Divine Will... (2005:206).

In contrast, *Salafees* view true justice as being a purely Islamic concept and that it emanates and is defined by Islamic concepts: the Qur'an and *Sunna* define morality. Modernists focus on overall *sharee'a* based objectives that give them the means to legitimize otherwise prohibited practices, also because they depart from the literal reading of the divine texts they are more amenable to change and flexible in interpretation. Shavit observes, “*Fiqh al-muwazanat [sic]* gives jurists the discretion to legitimize otherwise prohibited actions if they have reason to believe that doing so would result in a lesser *mufsada* (harm) or greater *maslaha* (benefit). It suggests that relying on specific evidence does not suffice in issuing decisions” (2015:38). The implications of this methodological approach, according to some, is that it tends to reduce the religiosity of many of the Muslims in the West allowing them to freely

flaunt important juristic rulings such as the prohibition of interest on loans and other restrictions.

Through the issuance of what *Salafees* might term as lax verdicts by moderates, lay persons tend to become less vigilant in their worship by indulging in normally prohibited practices. *Salafees* on the other hand, are far less accommodating in their issuance of verdicts and often cite the principle closing the door to evil. Tariq Ramadan observes that the vast majority of Muslims in the West “do not practice their religion regularly and experience no specific ‘religious’ problems in their daily lives” (Shavit 2015:5). A logical result of such broadly interpreted *sharee’a* objectives and rulings is a waning of religiosity. In sum, the modernist approach to living as a Muslim minority is based upon asserting an assimilated identity, worship is perceived as a personal choice and migration to the West is seen as a positive to exercise Western freedoms that many feel they were denied in their home countries. In contrast, *Salafees* tend to assert their Islamic identity and practices more outwardly, emphasize migration to Muslim countries, and generally withdraw from socio-cultural practices seen as un-Islamic.⁸¹

As was previously mentioned, moderates, unlike *Salafees*, emphasize the overall *sharee’a* objectives and the intrinsic spirit of the texts sidelining literalism and at times specific texts. Many moderates are a product of contemporary times as well as highly influenced by the rationalist school of thought. On the one hand, this synthesis of beliefs and methodologies appears to have evolved in the West due to the secularization of Muslims living in these societies; however, there are increasing calls for democratization and secularization in many Muslim societies. This call for opening political space is often a result of extensive exposure to Western ideals and a desire to imitate Western values and institutions.

⁸¹ Shavit notes that modernist or *wasatis* “...hold that *salafis* (of all factions) must relinquish their frozen, literalist understanding of Islam and should pay attention to the spirit and objectives of Islamic law rather than focus on its form and partialities. They also demand that *salafis* stop being arrogant and dismissive of Muslims who do not share their misled opinions” (2015:26-27).

By embracing Western values, modernists overall approach to *fiqh* in the West is influenced. The liberalization of *fiqh* in order to meet the needs of Muslim communities in the West has immense implications for the day-to-day practice of Muslim minorities.⁸² One example of the variant approaches of textual interpretation and *fiqh* is the issue of bank interest-based loans. Some moderates justify taking interest-based loans (a clear prohibition) as a necessity for Muslims in the West. “The principle that individual needs can be regarded as necessities, the idea that in Europe *da’wa* is a *maslaha* that justifies the suspension of the prohibited, and the concept of searching within the schools of law for the most pragmatic decision” is an attempt by moderates to ease the burden of the prohibition of interest to facilitate homeownership (Shavit 2015:142). Some of the arguments given for this justification are that Muslims can be seen as respectable homeowners and that through the absence of the burden of paying rent, Muslims can divert more energy and resources to *da’wa* to non-Muslims. Other arguments often cited are that according to the Hanafi *mathhab* otherwise prohibited transactions in *daar al-harb* become allowable, therefore some modernists cite this precedence for legitimizing interest in the West. A third more compelling argument used by moderates is that homeownership is seen as a *maslaha* safeguarding life, honor, property, which are all core *sharee’a* objectives. Proponents of this view claim that shelter is a necessity and owning a home is a need. They argue that by fulfilling the need of homeownership one can provide safety for his or her family, which apartment living cannot provide, at the same time allowing one to reside close to a place of worship and Muslim neighbors.

Perspectives on *Hijra*

Another highly contested issue between modernists and *Salafees* is the *hijra*.

⁸²The liberalization of *fiqh* should not be confused with contextualizing *fiqh* rulings. Liberalization entails conceding foundation principles whereas contextualizing is adapting without contradicting core precepts. For example, attempting to moderate the prohibition of usury or relaxing the requirements of *hijab*. The liberalization of *fiqh* usually is achieved in one of four ways: broadening the scope of what is considered a necessity, broadening the concept of *maslaha*, capitalizing on capricious verdicts, or reinterpreting *sharee’a* principles according to their linguistic meanings.

Modernists essentially allow for, and even encourage, *hijra* to non-Muslim states if they believe those states are democratic, or as means to escape oppressive regimes.⁸³

Salafis, in contrast, consider residence in non-Muslim lands to be at best tolerable and justifiable almost exclusively as a means for proselytization they stress the universality of Islamic laws and thus reject, in principle though not always in practice, the accommodation of decisions to the unique conditions of Muslim minorities or the issuance of concessions as a means to enhance proselytization. Their decisions reject the *wasati [sic]* approach to *maslaha* and emphasize the impermissibility of friendly relations with non-Muslims based on a broad understanding of loyalty and disavowal. Nevertheless, they demand that Muslim minorities abide by the laws of the infidel states in which they reside” (Shavit 2015:78-79).

While Shavit’s analysis of *Salafees* is consistent with the evidence presented here, there has been a noticeable permutation of ideals and priorities of Western *Salafees*. In part, these changes are a result of experience gathered while being abroad in various Muslim countries and new geo-political realities. Within the *Salafee* communities in the West there has been a paradigm shift with many *Salafees* no longer emphasizing migration from non-Muslim countries to Muslim countries. Baker observes:

I remember when I was new on the *deen* as a *Salafee* there was a lot of talk about *hijra* to the land of the Muslims to study, to work and stuff like that. I think with the generation that has been here, that now knows and has actualized their *deen* in a more comprehensive way... theoretical learning and then abstract (enhances their insight). (By) seeing the *deen*, being more experienced and mature on the *deen* (gives them new perspectives). I think that that has happened with many who came out and lived in the Middle East. The actualizing has not only showed us how to live a more Islamic life, but that we were being a more ‘religious than thou’ beforehand, being overzealous” (personal

⁸³The first Muslim migration was essentially to escape persecution in order to openly practice their faith. However, it must be observed that at that time there was no Muslim society and the migration was from a polytheistic society to a Christian society where they sought refuge. This researcher is unaware of any classical verdicts advocating or legitimizing migration from an oppressive Muslim land to a non-Muslim land, which tends to be the norm in contemporary times. In fact, from the *Salafee* perspective, it is usually argued against migrating to non-Muslim lands for fear of compromising one’s faith or outright losing one’s Islamic identity especially in successive generations.

communication 10/1/17).

Baker highlights the frustration many Western *Salafees* experience while residing in a Muslim country, which is not welcoming or accommodating to their needs. Many who left the West to reside in these lands have become disenchanted due to poor treatment, barriers to obtaining residency, lack of acceptance for themselves and their families, and sometimes open hostility. These challenges and the feeling of a lack of permanency have caused many to become disillusioned and moved some to become more assertive in their Western identity. Baker observes, “Those who have moved to the Muslim lands see how it has been implemented, how it works, they have matured in their reflective stages of looking at the *deen*... also they have realized this cannot be a permanent home moving back to their societies” (personal communication 10/1/17). He also mentions that many who attempted *hijra* experienced what he referred to as a reflective phase after being absent from their societies. At this stage they became more aware of their national identity and reflective of their position in their host Muslim societies. Many of those attempting *hijra* realized that some of the rights and freedoms they valued were being protected more so in their countries of origin.

In contrast, Shakir McGill, a Canadian national and well-known student of *Shaikh* Muqbil al-Waadi’ee, is a long-term advocate of *hijra* and has resided in Yemen for over twenty years throughout several wars. McGill believes *hijra* is an obligation; however, those who reside in the West should be diligent in practicing Islam without compromising core tenets. During an interview conducted 11 October 2017, McGill stated:

As we know Islamic beliefs are unchanging but our application of Islam can change and there are numerous examples of this in the history of the Prophet. We have the Meccan period, the Medina period, times of war, times of peace, we have times of strength and unity, we have times of weakness and division. We have places where we are under Islamic rule and government and places where Muslims are not in that situation, so these are all different contexts which demand different approaches, practices all based upon the Book and the *Sunna*

(personal communication 2017).

Mcgill's analysis is indicative of the *Salafee* approach, which is more literalist and adherent to core texts, especially in creedal matters. For *Salafees*, the core texts are never to be exceeded, although contemporary issues, time, and place all have a role in contextualizing their practices. Fundamental *fiqh* principles are applied considering the core texts, which through *ijtihad* are applied in the contemporary setting. *Salafees* view their methodology as comprehensive: by adhering to core principles and texts they believe they can deduce a solution for any issue that arises. McGill states:

A Muslim wherever he may be, is (obliged) to follow the commands of Allah according to his ability whether he is in the Muslim land or the non-Muslim land. The fact remains being in the Muslim land in that context if we are applying Islam according to our ability are we still making compromises? I do not know collectively if the *Salafees* in the West are practicing what Allah the Almighty has commanded not making compromises in their religion... In general, and collectively I do not know if the *Salafees* are upon this... Is it to be taken into consideration and recognized that Muslims operate within the legal framework of a non-Muslim society? I understand that we follow and obey Allah the Almighty irrespective of whether that is within the framework of the legal framework of that society or not without making concessions (personal communication: 10/11/2017).

Mcgill raises two very important questions: are Muslims obliged to respect the laws of their host country? If so, should they obey non-Muslim authorities if it involves compromise of their core beliefs? *Shaikh* Muhammad bin Ibraheem, the former *muftee* prior to bin Baz, states, "The rule of Allah and his Messenger (saw) does not differ in and of itself pertaining to the time, changing circumstances, and new events. Therefore, there is no issue whatsoever that is not contained in the Book of Allah and the *Sunna* of His Messenger (saw)" (1979:12/300). For *Salafees*, the fundamentals of *sharee'a* are immutable; however, at the same time they do recognize that contemporary challenges require *ijtihad*. To answer McGill's query it has been well documented from a variety of sources that many *Salafee* scholars have long advocated that there should be respect for law and order, regardless of

whether one resides in a Muslim or non-Muslim state. Some scholars declare that obedience is a religious obligation, so long as the laws one is obeying are not in contradiction to divine law. For example, laws which are not explicitly mentioned, or issues that are not detailed in the Qur'an and *Sunna*, and do not contradict divine law should be respected. To illustrate, laws, which are for the public good and general welfare of the society should be followed: traffic and public safety laws. *Salafees* exercise limited civil disobedience by refraining from un-Islamic mandates: those directives that unequivocally contradict established Islamic law; however, this does not equate to violent resistance. *Salafee* scholars on numerous occasions have denounced as un-Islamic all kinds of violence and terrorist attacks that individual Muslim minorities have engaged in as was demonstrated in chapter two and three.

According to *Salafee* scholars like al-Dh^uafeeree obedience to a non-Muslim leader can in fact warrant the five fundamental *fiqh* rulings depending upon the particular scenario. Sometimes it can be an obligation or recommendation to execute the law of a non-Muslim ruler "if the command emanates from the order to follow Allah and His Messenger (saw), but not because the leader commanded it" (2009:1/249). This means that obedience is not in and of itself to the non-Muslim leader, but rather to fulfill the Islamic obligation because in this case the leader's command is commensurate with Islam. This is due to the scholarly consensus that non-Muslims should not have authority over Muslims. Furthermore, al-Qaad^hee l'yaadh (died 554 *Hijra*) states, "There is no difference between the scholars that there should be no choosing a non-Muslim leader and he cannot remain a leader as long as he exhibits the traits of disbelief" (2009:1/247). While explicating the creed of *Ahl al-Hadeeth* ibn Taimeeya states *Ahl al-Sunna*:

does not believe it is obligatory to obey the leader in every issue. Instead it is not obligatory except for *sharee'a* issues. Even if the leader is just one cannot disobey Allah. If he commands to obedience to Allah obey him... as one only obeys Allah. If a tyrant or disbeliever commands one to be obedient to Allah it is not permissible to disobey Allah or nullify His command because of the tyrant's order. Similarly, if

he speaks truthfully it is impermissible to disbelieve him (1986:3/387).

According to *Salafees*, sovereignty rests with Allah and that commands that are in accordance with Islamic dictates must be obeyed regardless of who issued them. Also, this statement illustrates that tyranny does not justify rebellion against a Muslim ruler and that anyone who speaks the truth should be listened to and statements are accepted in accordance with their authenticity.

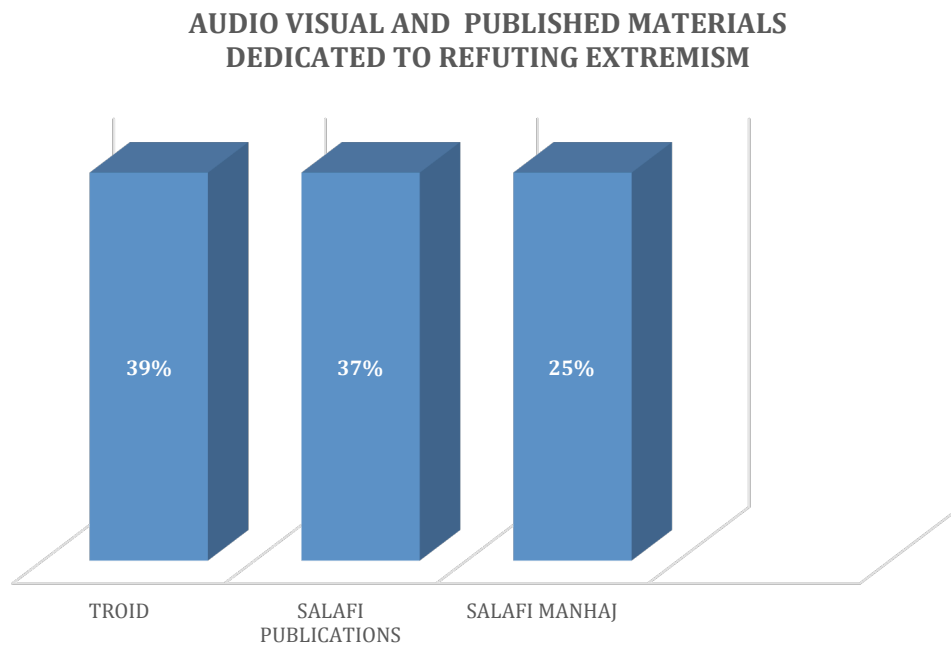
Salafees justify following a non-Muslim authority based upon four basic principles although they do not deem it obligatory in and of itself. First, *Salafees* consider it necessary to fulfill the overall objective of *da'wa*. Being mindfulness of the law and projecting themselves as law-abiding citizens helps to portray the message of Islam in a positive manner. Second, *Salafees* deem obedience to non-Muslim authorities as part of the fulfillment of trusts, contractual agreements and covenants. This is especially relevant for Muslim minorities. Third, they argue that obeying the non-Muslim authority under these circumstances achieves the *sharee'a* objective of protecting oneself. For instance, obeying traffic laws are both for general societal benefit and the protection of individuals. Fourth, *Salafees* contend that respect for non-Muslim authorities also can prevent harm to Muslims. For example, if Muslims display disobedience to authorities they will incur punishment: fees, fines, and possible imprisonment thus violating the *sharee'a* objectives of protecting one's wealth and persons (Baazmool 2017).

***Salafees* and the Propensity for Violence**

As was suggested in chapter two of this research most critics of *Salafism* conflate it with violent extremism or an ideological off shoot of *takfeeree* ideology. However, the aim of this research, and an emerging body of research suggests that there are clear distinctions between the *takfeeree-jihaadee manhaj* and that of *Salafees*. Moreover, *Salafees* in their discourse and practice appeared to be consistent in eschewing violence. Baker states:

There is an array of empirical evidence attached to the various *Salafee* communities in the West, which will show an abundance of refutations, clarifications, and the like, which is indicative of those communities positions regarding extremism, which I don't think you will see with any other community or school of thought (personal communication 10/1/2017).

Graph 2: Sample of English Salafee Websites refuting extremism



Consistent with Baker's findings this research found, for instance, that the website salafipublications.com bookstore had dedicated 20% of their published books to countering extremism, terrorism, and *jihadist* ideology, while seventeen percent of their published pamphlets were dedicated to counter-terrorism comprising of about 37% of their total material. In addition, the website troid.org, another longstanding *Salafee* affiliated organization, had dedicated 24% of their publications to anti-extremist literature and 15% of their video lectures to counter-extremism and repudiating terrorism. The website salafimanhaj.com, a rival *Salafee* organization seemed to have the highest number of articles ranging from counter-extremism

narratives to rebutting *jihaadist* violence, with about 25% of their articles posted dealing with those topics. Although they had the lowest percentage of their overall material oriented towards these topics they had the highest number of articles allocated to presenting counter-narratives. This data suggests that some of the reknown *Salafee* websites in the West allocate about 25%-30% of their materials to providing counter-narratives and alternative strategies to violence and extremist ideologies. This is significant because it illustrates the willingness of leading proponents of *Salafism* to address controversial topics like extremism and engage with and counter the messaging of radical ideologies. Also, it shows that *Salafees* focus more attention to countering violent extremists than most other groups that oppose their *manhaj* illustrating their recognition of the dangers imposed by extremist groups.

Some critics seem to suggest that *Salafees* have an overlapping ideology with many of the extremist groups mentioned in this research. Furthermore, they claim the world should be concerned about the latent violence inherent to *Salafism*. Baker responds to this claim by stating:

Had it been the case that *Salafees* are dormant waiting to enact violence we would have evidence to suggest that. Some of the known individuals who later became radicalized that were present in *Salafee* communities had been ostracized and expelled from those communities. In addition, all known established communities have an abundance of counter-extremist literature and well documented counter radicalization efforts (personal communication 10/1/2017).

Baker's research suggests there is a process of radicalization, that is not particular to the *Salafee* community, where converts experience phases of religious development and oscillate between different levels of religiosity. Communities and individuals that are the most marginalized in their host societies tend to be the most vulnerable to extremist rhetoric and more prone to violence (Baker 2009). In addition, Baker's findings imply that it is a series of factors and a variety of indicators, which contribute to the process of radicalization, in conjunction with

ideology. Baker's conclusions concur with the findings of this research, which show that ideology is a central factor, thus making it essential to discern violent *takfeeree* ideology and *jihaadist* belief from *Salafism*. As this research suggests, there is a great chasm between *Salafism* and violent extremist ideology, which is apparent by analyzing both core creedal tenets and *manhaj* of the various groups.

Conclusion

This chapter surveyed several definitions of a liberal democratic system with the aim of providing a framework to analyze *Salafees'* behavior and paradigm with regards to such a system. This is done primarily due to the commonly held assumption that those critical of a democratic system have a tendency towards violence, which has not been the case as this research has shown with *Salafees*. *Salafees* are known for being exclusivist, in which they have no problem acknowledging; however, they take exception to the claim they are violent, and as much of the evidence presented in the previous chapters illustrate, they disassociate their *manhaj* from violent extremism as well as actively denounce it. Furthermore, as Baker's research showed, there is very little evidence linking *Salafee* mosques, especially in the West, with violent extremists. In fact, research suggests they are an antidote to violent extremism as some community policing programs in the UK, such as STREET, show. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

Also, this chapter has analyzed and contrasted the *Salafee* view of democracy with that of modernists within the Islamic community to highlight some of the core arguments for and against a democratic system. After presenting the numerous claims it was concluded that methodological approaches to the divine texts and their interpretation determined the various stances of proponents for democracy and its detractors.

In addition, this chapter explored concepts like secularism and pluralism and how the *Salafee* approach radically departed from modernists. Again, the primary factor

that distinguishes the two approaches and their arguments was textual interpretation and literalism, which also impacted their views regarding residence in non-Muslim societies. Finally, this chapter analyzed whether *Salafees* abide by laws and institutions in a non-Muslim society, and surveyed three English *Salafee* websites to assist in assessing *Salafism* and its propensity for violence. These website samples were introduced to show evidence that mainstream *Salafism* has an active role in challenging violent extremists in the Muslim community. The evidence suggests that *Salafees* do not pose a violent threat to non-Muslim societies and this claim is substantiated by both Muslim and non-Muslim academics. The subsequent chapter will include additional sampling of *Salafee* websites with the hope of assessing the effectiveness of *Salafee* efforts in contesting violent extremist ideology.

Chapter Five: Assessing *Salafism*

Introduction

Having argued in the last chapter that *Salafees* contempt for democracy is not a precursor to violence, this research will now investigate whether *Salafees* are effective as an antidote to extremism. This research calls into question the labels “extremist” or “radical” being used as descriptors to designate all groups and individuals that do not hold democracy as the basis for their political system or ideology. Further, this research questions the assumption that those who do not believe in a democratic system (*Salafees*) are predisposed to violence. In fact, the research indicates that groups that do not endorse democracy are not necessarily proponents of violence. Other significant issues explored in this chapter are the process of radicalization, how counter-narratives are used to disrupt radicalization, and the contribution of *Salafees* to that process.

This chapter hopes to show how extremists recruit to gain a glimpse of the magnitude of the radicalization process and what causes individuals to transition to extremism. Also, it is hoped that this chapter will provide an accurate assessment of *Salafees*’ effectiveness in counter extremism by examining the arguments of both proponents and cynics of *Salafism*. Finally, several case studies of *Salafee* efforts from Arabic language webistes will be assessed to appraise the effectiveness in challenging violent extremist narratives.

Radicalization is an immensely complicated process and pinpointing its causes is extremely arduous. There are a variety of definitions used to describe radicalization and its stages. Veldhuis and Staun state:

Definitions of radicalisation most often centre around two different foci: 1) on violent radicalisation, where emphasis is put on the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of violence to attain the stated goal; 2) on a broader sense of radicalization [*sic*], where emphasis is placed on the active pursuit or acceptance of far-reaching changes in society, which may or

may not constitute a danger to democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals (2009:4).

The absence of a universal definition and the imposition of a single norm, system (democracy as opposed to *sharee'a*), or set of values further complicates the efforts to challenge extremism as was alluded to in the discussion around terrorism in chapter four. Also, this chapter will analyze whether *Salafees'* counter-narratives are effective in countering extremist ideology by assessing their arguments and efforts in countering radicalization. Finally, the claims of various academics will be analyzed and contrasted regarding *Salafees'* effectiveness.

How Extremists Recruit and Their *Da'wa*

Extremist *jihadee* groups use a variety of means to recruit and radicalize their target audiences. The Internet has been used to develop an intricate web of social media platforms and forums to recruit foreign fighters to participate in conflict zones around the world. "The professional and sophisticated use of social media by ISIL in particular has been a game-changer. Extremists are also populating the spaces where young people consume and share information, socialize and are socialized...Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Reddit, Snapchat, Ask fm and Kik.3" (Ran 2015:3). The *jihadee* community has created a vast techno infrastructure to disseminate propaganda to create a universal identity based upon *takfeeree* ideology. "Popular extremist propaganda often includes: high production value, the use of fast-paced editing, music and a charismatic narrator, and a call to action" (RAN 2015:2). Many of the groups have been extremely effective in producing propaganda and media that conveys their messaging and narrative regarding contemporary affairs. Extremists, like al-Qaeda and ISIS, use mainstream social media platforms to recruit, inspire, and incite violence. The advent of the Internet has substantially increased the means of dispensing information in ways unimaginable in the past.

This allows extremist groups to continue to reach, inspire and radicalize [sic] their traditional constituencies, while continuing to grow their tacit base

of sympathisers [*sic*]. They are also drawing audiences into events in real time, as was evidenced by the way the May 2013 Woolwich attackers encouraged onlookers to film and upload the murder of Lee Rigby and how al-Shabaab offered real-time battlefield updates throughout the Westgate attacks in Nairobi in September 2013 (Briggs and Feve 2014:6).

Briggs and Feve identify several tactics that extremists use to appeal to their target audience with four, according to this researcher, being core tactics. Extremists create a sense of duty, victimhood, extoll the religious rewards of *jihaad*, and help create a sense of identity (2014). The way in which they carry this out is by first arguing that there is an urgent sense of duty to protect Islam and Muslims from foreign aggression. By portraying the conflict as being between good and evil, monotheism and polytheism, faith and disbelief, extremist groups create a sense of exigency and duty amongst their constituents. This allows recruiters to present their message as a call of duty that portrays their fighters as brave *mujaahideen* who heed their religious duty. The formation of micro-communities linked together by violent media images helps to foster the narrative that the West is waging a violent struggle against Islam. Second, extremists appeal to the sensitivities of their audience by pointing to history: the loss of Muslim prestige and empire, as well as the lasting effects of colonial domination. A common characteristic of extremists is that they manipulate their target audiences by creating a sense of victimhood and the need for revenge for both real and perceived grievances. For instance, *jihaadees* tend to exploit contemporary conflicts involving the persecution of Muslims to create a sense of urgency to reciprocate violence. Third, extremists use core religious texts to inspire and instill a sense of obligation in their target audience. Brutal imagery of carnage, intricate computerized graphics, and video footage glorifying violence bolstered by arguments deduced from core religious texts are used to substantiate *jihaadee* violent behavior, which serves to inspire and legitimize their cause and propagate their narrative. Last, extremists create an identity of the glorified *Jihaadee* that defends the *umma* from persecution and advances the Islamic call. "Identity fusion -a visceral sense of oneness with the group- results from feelings of a shared essence, forged through the sharing of emotional, life-shaping experiences. A construct developed by social psychologist

Bill Swann at the University of Texas, it is a more powerful motivator of self-sacrifice than merely identifying with a group” (ox.ac.uk 2018:1). These tactics are used simultaneously to produce their desired effect. The variant tactics used by extremists to convey their message, as some suggest, is mainly effective because it exploits the emotions of the target audience by instilling a sense of duty and urgency to join the *jihadist* struggle. Egerton states in his critique of *Salafism* that “(t)he leap from non-militant Westerner to militant Salafist is made possible by the exercise of the political imagination which produces an imagined world of *ummah* [sic] versus West” (2011:4). Others like Whitehouse argue that a variety of factors contribute to fostering a sort of psychological community, which makes the path to violent extremism and self-sacrifice easier (Oxford 2018). Egerton, like many other academics assumes *Salafism* is a multi-tiered movement with both pacifist and violent strands, where individuals can easily transition from pacifism to violent extremism. However, as Baker suggests:

the Salafist position is considered antithetical to the takfeeri [sic] understanding of Jihad [sic]. The latter’s emphasis on both political and apparently knowledge-based principles of Islam, although misrepresented by them, appeal to susceptible young Muslims who are disgruntled by a perceived over emphasis on politics from the Islamist/iqwani [sic] constituencies on the one hand. On the other, the youth, while attracted to the ideological and knowledge-based focus of Salafism, are disillusioned by the movement’s apparent political disengagement. Violent extremists are thus successful in attracting youth due to their ability to amalgamate Islamist politicisation [sic] with Salafist ideological underpinnings. These two powerful components provide the impetus behind the attraction for violent extremist propaganda (2009:345-346).

Many Muslim critics of *Salafism* feel frustrated by the apparent inaction and political stagnancy of *Salafees*. They often lament that their *manhaj* offers no solution to the tyranny and conflicts that afflict the *umma*. An oft-cited appraisal of *Salafees* is that they are unreasonably obedient to Muslim leaders and discount their flagrant violations of Islamic law. Furthermore, they accuse *Salafees* of deriding *jihad*. This negative perception of *Salafees* only further serves the *takfeerees*’ recruitment efforts. Another problem is the fact that *Salafees* do not often address

contemporary politics leaving them at odds with their potential constituents who may be looking for a practical solution to deal with current problems. This is where the extremists play a role by using social media, offering action, and filling a void. ISIS's social media presence is unparalleled and makes them highly effective at recruiting foreign fighters and promoting their narrative. The large number of foreign fighters inspired by their message best illustrates the effectiveness of ISIS's social media campaign.

ISIS recruits on a 24/7 basis in over 21 languages over the Internet using videos, memes, tweets and other social media postings and swarming in on anyone that retweets, likes or endorses their materials to try to seduce them into the group. Their unprecedented social media drive has resulted in over 30,000 foreign fighters from more than 100 countries migrating to Syria and Iraq" (McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla 2017:50).

ISIS's propaganda is powerful and appeals to the emotions of its audience, which makes it both deadly effective and severely challenging to mitigate. Another challenge is the nature in which they recruit and inspire, which departs from traditional terrorist recruitment efforts. ISIS along with al-Qaeda, have morphed from being direct managers of terrorist attacks and face to face recruiters, to being travel agents to conflict zones as well as encouraging lone-wolf attacks.

ISIS has been active in both disseminating information, with over 46,000 Twitter accounts being used by their supporters from September to December in 2014, and rebuking those who condemn them (McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla 2017:50). Extremist groups that are decentralized have the advantage of inspiring other technologically savvy individuals to convert to their cause and become active disseminators of their message. Many of the contemporary extremist movements permit a franchise of their movement and ideology, which allows them to reach those individuals that may have remained marginalized, inactive, or even normally resistant to extremist messaging.

The process of radicalization is complex, and it is often the result of a variety of factors. Charles Allen states about the phenomena of radicalization that it is "the

process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change” (2007:4). The view that radicalism is the result of a multitude of factors is commonly acknowledged by many academics. Vidino suggests that it is a complex individualized process often where individuals are not groomed at all, and they transition from a personal radicalization phase to a mobilization phase in which they become active terrorists. Therefore, due to the complexity of radicalization, detecting its various stages while simultaneously countering extremist messaging is increasingly difficult (2011).

Counter-narrative and De-radicalization

The efforts to counter extremism and disrupt radicalization primarily consist of three broad based approaches: counter-narratives, alternative narratives, and government strategic communications (RAN 2015). These approaches are built upon the assumption that the most effective means for dealing with extremist narratives is by presenting counter-narratives and preventative narratives. Counter-narratives include attempts to disrupt and turn extremists by presenting an alternative message challenging the espousers of radicalism and their violent tactics. Individuals, groups, and government initiatives that usually fall under counter-radicalization programs can all present counter-narratives. El-Said states, “Counter-radicalization refers to a package of policies and measures designed and implemented by a country to prevent youth or most vulnerable groups and communities from becoming radicalized in their home countries” (2015:4). These preventative narratives involve stopping radicalism and recruitment. Furthermore, government sponsored efforts to combat radicalism and extremism according to El-Said are two pronged: counter-radicalization and counterterrorism approaches. In highlighting the difference between counter-radicalism policies and counter-terrorist strategies El-Said states, “Instead of targeting terrorists, which is the focus of the counterterrorism policy, counter-radicalization targets communities instead that are themselves targeted by violent extremists for recruitment, sympathy or any form of

support” (El-Said 2015:10). There is a variety of counter-narrative approaches all focusing on different tactics to counter the messaging, contest the messenger, or influence the target audience of the message. According to RAN Centre the primary narratives and forms of outreach can be characterized as: counter-narratives that seek to directly or indirectly challenge extremist narratives either through ideology, logic, fact or humor. They further claim that these efforts should tailor their messages to appeal to the youth through social media and popular culture, in addition to, using defectors to counter and discredit extremist narratives. A critical part of counter extremism is challenging the narrative of *jihaadee* groups and discrediting their ideologues by “revealing incongruities and contradictions in the terrorist narratives and how terrorists act, disrupting analogies between the target narrative and real-world events, disrupting binary themes of the group’s ideology, and advocating an alternative view of the terrorist narrative’s target” (Braddock and Horgan 2015:397). Narratives have shown to play a significant role in influencing ideology and intent, therefore counter-narratives can best be effective if they also are comprised of a consistent set of beliefs that can provide a positive alternative. This is in part why *Salafist* messaging, for some, appears so effective.

The second approach to counter extremism, according to the RAN Centre, is based upon supplying alternative narratives. Alternative narratives seek to counter the radicalization process and the progression towards violence by putting forward a positive story about social values, such as tolerance, openness, freedom and democracy (2015). Jacobson suggests affirming positive messaging rather than negating false ones to counter extremists’ messages. He further claims that in the past the Internet was a facilitator to the radicalization process not the driver (Jacobson 2010). *Salafees* are also active in supplying positive alternative messages that they use to discredit extremists’ paradigm. Although their messaging does not include democracy, it does supply a replacement vision that is non-violent.

The final approach entails using government strategic communications: actions to get the message out about what government is doing, refuting misinformation, and

seeking to forge relationships with key constituencies and audiences (McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla 2017). Both government and civil society have a role in combating extremism and radicalization. Increasingly, they are becoming more cognizant that fighting extremism and terror requires much more than just military strategies and that more broad-based approaches are necessary to counter extremists and their efforts to radicalize.

Other methods often used by governments as a tool in counter extremism policy are based upon efforts to de-radicalize extremists or get them to disengage from participation in violence. “Disengagement refers to a behavioral change, such as leaving a group or changing one’s role within it. It does not necessitate a change in values or ideals but requires relinquishing the objective of achieving change through violence” (Fink and Hearne 2008:3). Although programs seeking to disengage individuals from using violence are generally considered the role of government, strong alternative narratives offered by *Salafees* that focus on non-violence and *da’wa* probably also play a role in convincing some extremists to disengage; however, this is often difficult to quantify. Nonetheless, it will be observed that some *Salafee* scholars have had success in disengaging extremists through compelling counter-narratives, as the forthcoming case studies will show.

The other strategy often used in counter extremist policy involves efforts to de-radicalize violent offenders or those predisposed to violence. This process, “however, implies a cognitive shift, a fundamental change in understanding. It is often triggered by a traumatic experience, which “challenges the coherence of the individual’s worldview” and can engender “post-traumatic growth.” A “cognitive opening” which makes an individual receptive to new ideas, is then created” (Fink and Hearne 2008:3). The case of Morten Storm who became uneasy with violent extremism after becoming disillusioned with violence, and subsequently leading him to renounce Islam is an example of how an event can trigger and challenge a person’s worldview leading them to disengage (Storm, Cruickshank, and Lister 2014). Storm states, “The whole construction of my faith was a house of cards built on one layer upon the next. Remove one, and all the others would collapse. It had

relied on a sense of momentum – a journey from finding Islam to becoming a Salafi [sic] to take up jihad [sic] in spirit and action” (2014:118). Storm, according to Baker's model, went from the preliminary stage where he was receptive to new beliefs and remained in this unstable transitional phase of development whilst amongst *Salafees* in Yemen. Although Storm resided in an environment in which it was easy to actualize *Salafist* practices his comprehension remained limited, which may have been a cause for his dissatisfaction and continual search. As this researcher was close to Storm at this phase it was observed that he did not continue his studies and quickly began to mix with other groups, and even his discourse began to become more politicized. Eventually he gravitated to the *takfeeree-jihaadee* constituency, which appeared to combine the politicization of the Islamists and the theological framework of the *Salafees*. For many, the process of radicalization or disengagement is often incremental and many variables such as incarceration, disillusionment, and trauma can all be a part of triggering this progression. Storm claims, “I also began to reconsider some of the justifications made for the murder and maiming of civilians. I had accepted such prescriptions in my obedience to the Salafist creed” (2014:118). Although Storm should be well-aware that *Salafism* and the ideology he embraced are antithetical and he expressed enmity in his later writings towards *Salafism*, he still claimed it was the *Salafist* creed that inspired him to radicalize and at the same time cause him to de-radicalize, question and later abandon his faith. De-radicalization, as was illustrated in the Saudi case study, is usually a more comprehensive set

of policies and measures designed and implemented by authorities in order to normalize and convince groups and individuals who have already become radicalized or violent extremists to repent and disengage from violence. The process can include a cognitive change (change in ideology and attitudes), simple disengagement (behavioral change to abandon violence while remaining radical), or both” (El-Said 2015:11).

Most *Salafees* are more grassroots in nature, therefore they lack in resources and the will to focus all their energy and *da'wa* efforts on counter-radicalization approaches. However, as the evidence suggests, they are effective in providing alternative narratives and refuting extremist ideologies. Although *Salafees* tend to

be focused upon engaging the ideology of extremists they do have some isolated initiatives in the West where they have engaged in counter-radicalization efforts. One such example was the UK based initiative STREET: Strategy to Reach, Empower and Educate Teenagers. STREET was a *Salafee* run organization created for guiding “at-risk youth to divert them from involvement in antisocial behavior, gang violence, and violent extremism, and toward leading more productive and positive lives” (Barclay 2011:1). STREET was also a partner with the UK government and local police. Reports indicate STREET was autonomous and that the organization was a successful model of community partnership operating under the guidelines of the UK government’s PREVENT counter-terrorism program. STREET’s success can in part be attributed to the shared cultural background and experience of its staff, as well as their *Salafee* identity, which enabled them to counter *takfeeree-jihaadee* narratives (Barclay 2011:1-5). Lambert states about the *takfeeree manhaj* that “(t)hey aren’t distorting Sufism, they’re not distorting Deobandi or Barelvi [sic] ideology. They’re distorting Salafism...[so] when well-meaning Muslims of other sects try to influence that sort of audience-they’re absolute outsiders” (cited in Barclay 2011:5). Lambert’s comment affirms two primary observations made over the course of this research. First, that although *jihaadist* and *takfeeree* groups claim *Salafism*, their *manhaj* is a distortion of *Salafee* core principles and the overall outcome of their *da’wa* efforts. Second, that *Salafees* are generally more capable, and credible to counter extremists’ narratives, because they generally have a deeper understanding of their positions and ideology. Barclay observes that *Salafees* in STREET are generally lauded by a variety of law enforcement officials and social service providers, as being effective counter-radicalization partners. He claims:

They also have the credibility among the target audience that other members of Muslim communities sometimes lack. None of those interviewed for this study, STREET included, believed the STREET model was the only solution, acknowledging that individuals and groups from other Muslim communities and those of other ideological orientations had also proven to be effective partners in many circumstances. Nevertheless, all agreed Street represented a highly effective contribution to countering

violent Islamist Radicalization (Barclay 2011:14).

There are other studies that suggest the disengagement of violent groups and their transitioning away from violence can have a positive effect upon their peers and other extremist groups to renounce violence. This also demonstrates that it is possible that *Salafee* counter-narratives can be effective in causing some individuals to disengage because they are consistent in their methods and counter extremist messaging. “In Egypt...the decision of one violent group had a direct impact on the choice of another to “disengage” from violent tactics. Until they disengaged, the groups Gama’a al-Islamiyah and “the Jihad” [*sic*] were together responsible for 95 percent of terrorism carried out in Egypt” (Fink and Hearne 2008:7). In addition to state coercion, the Egyptian case seemed to show that groups could influence one another by depicting the fragmentation of a movement, showing discontent by highlighting their weariness of using violence against the state. Also, groups that shun violence after conflict can illustrate that such tactics have no real achievable objectives. Some *Salafees* that have been a part of violent groups prior to their embracing *Salafism* can be effective in showing incongruities in their former partisanship. In fact, *Salafees* often expose the inconsistencies of violent extremists in their speeches while denouncing their approach. Also, as was discussed prior in the research, Saudi Arabia has engaged in and invested extensively in de-radicalization programs, and their efforts are largely seen as successful. These are indications that *Salafees* do have effective, both grassroots and government, approaches in combatting extremism and disrupting radicalization.

As was alluded to previously, many counter-terrorism experts conclude that radicalization is a process not a single event. This is a very important observation that lends insight into how to approach radicalization as a problem and attend to it with sound academic solutions. In a report issued by the RAN Centre the authors argue “exposure to extremist propaganda-both online and offline- is critical to the process of radicalization. Extremist narratives are effective because of their simplicity, their use of scapegoating, and their emotional appeals to fear, anger, shame, and honour. Their messages are crafted to exploit identity issues that many

young people may be experiencing” (2015:2). Extremists appeal to the emotion by using vivid imagery to recruit for their cause and reach their target audience, which allows their messaging to be effective in the overall process of radicalization.

Treating radicalization as a process requires a completely different approach, one where the overriding objective is to win the ‘hearts and minds ‘of communities most vulnerable to radicalization...this approach should both understand and refute ideology of VEm (violent extremists) to successfully deal with conditions conducive to radicalization and extremism that lead to terrorism” (El-Said 2015:4).

Evaluating Counter-narratives

Much of the literature suggests that effective counter-narratives are important to disrupt the message of extremists in hopes of curtailing recruitment of radicals. However, there is a need for evaluating effectiveness of those counter-narratives. According to the Ran Centre there are several factors in evaluating the success of counter-narratives including:

- the credibility of the messenger delivering the narrative,
- how engaging the counter-narrative material is,
- an in-depth understanding of the audience targeted,
- how focused the goals and objectives of the campaign are (2015).

Objectives of counter-extremist narratives should be specific, measurable, and realistic instead of vague goals, which contain little value for those assessing their effectiveness (Reynolds and Tuck 2016:15). According to the RAN Centre some of the intended outcomes for measuring effectiveness of counter-narrative campaigns is fewer people espousing extremist ideals, which can be assessed by measuring popularity of sharing content, searches, and the number of likes. Also, looking for an increase in individuals rebuking extremist ideas online and becoming critical of violent ideologies and groups.

Jacobson lists 4 means for crafting a successful counter-narrative to extremism. First, he suggests that there should be a strong effort to undermine extremist leadership by developing messages that undermine their authority and call into

question their credibility. Second, he emphasizes the importance of highlighting Muslim civilian suffering because of terror attacks to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the extremist narrative. Third, Jacobson recommends portraying terrorists as criminals and highlighting their links to criminal organizations. Fourth, he advocates focusing on the terrorist lifestyle by exploiting the fact that new recruits are treated badly, and that reality contradicts their propaganda (2010:4). “Most experts agree that the most effective tool to discredit both ISIS and their militant jihadi [*sic*] ideology is using the voices of disillusioned ISIS cadres themselves [*sic*]” (McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla 2017:51). The importance of discrediting extremist ideologues and their narratives cannot be overstated, and *Salafees* have made numerous strides in debunking extremist narratives and engaging their ideas. In one such lecture, *Shaikh* al-Rehailee mentions a story of an individual that allegedly traveled to Syria and became disillusioned when he found that ISIS spent considerable efforts attempting to discredit Saudi *Salafee* scholars and spread *takfeeree* propaganda. Furthermore, he found that the *jihadee* lifestyle they promoted contradicted the reality on the ground (2016). “There are often a number of other elements that can strengthen the resolve of a militant to disengage or withdraw from violent activism. Cumulatively, it has been argued, such processes can have a positive impact on global counterterrorism efforts by promoting the internal fragmentation of violent radical groups and by delegitimizing their rhetoric and tactics in the eyes of the broader public” (Fink and Hearne 2008:1). If counter-narratives and alternative messages are weak and ineffective then the results can be damaging to the credibility of the messenger. There are many potential unintended side effects of failed counter-narratives. Some of the negative outcomes and risks associated with an unsuccessful counter-narrative are messages can serve to alienate communities and at-risk individuals. Another potential unintended outcome is that counter extremist messages may be viewed as unbelievable and weak serving to empower the extremists’ narratives. Lastly, if counter-narratives are not focused they run the risk of being too broad, thus wasteful of resources (RAN 2015). In the UK for instance, government has allotted many resources and funded numerous counter-radicalization efforts with many of those efforts being ineffective

when considering more than 800 fighters have left to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, one of the largest contingencies from Western countries. This indicates that the intended target audience may not accept the counter-narratives presented. “For instance, during the last fifteen years the UK Home Office commissioned websites and groups to argue against al-Qaeda’s use of “Martyrdom” and calls to militant jihad [*sic*] using Islamic scriptures and logical arguments and also presenting moderate views of Islam” (McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla 2017:50). According to a 2015 House of Commons report the UK efforts were to focus on four primary objectives: preventing terrorist apologists from traveling to the UK, guiding local authorities and institutions to understand and use statutory powers for challenging extremists, removing online extremist content, and supporting community-based approaches to deal with radical propaganda (2015:9). The UK also focused on supporting at risk individuals through programs that countered extremist ideology, sought to support mainstream voices in civil society and aggressively pursued extremist recruiters and personalities. In addition, the UK initiative sought to integrate isolated communities and pinpoint potential radicals. Even with the large amount of resources dedicated to counter extremism. These efforts were largely unsuccessful in the face of the graphic images, techno savvy videos, and strong narratives of al-Qaeda supporters. Also, the messages and messengers of the counter-narratives put forth did not seem credible to extremists. However, this is where *Salafees* have been more effective as their arguments are more rooted in divine scripture and traditional sources. Also, *Salafees* appear more credible to extremists and the target audience they are trying to influence and are often referenced in both negative and positive ways.

Transition to Radicalism

Understanding the root causes of radicalism and how individuals transition to violent action is an extremely complex phenomenon. The reasons for transitioning to violent extremism and its relationship to radical ideals are many and quite perplexing, and generally lie outside the scope of this study. However, by perusing some of the numerous academic theories attempting to explain this process, some

consistent trends can be observed. Many of the models surveyed show that most academics believe it is a process with variant stages. Some theories advocate that radicalism is a top down process in which recruiters or ideologues recruit individuals and indoctrinate them. Others suggest it is a bottom up process where individuals are often self-radicalized through online activity or exposure to radical ideals through literature and the variant forms of social media. Another important observation made by a growing number of academics is that radicalism or holding radical ideals does not necessitate violent action. Still some question the role of ideology as the main reason for violent extremist action (McCauley and Moskalenko 2016). The assumption of this study is that ideology is an important factor in the process of radicalization and violent extremism. This conclusion has been arrived at due to the numerous studies showing the success in recruitment efforts of groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS and how those influenced by their paradigm seem to be more prone and predisposed to violence. “However, a more challenging issue has begun to emerge. There is evidence that not all those who engage in violent behavior necessarily need to possess radical beliefs... A lingering question in terrorism studies is whether violent beliefs precede violent action, and it seems to be the case that while they often do, it is not always the case (Horgan 2012:1). While Horgan’s observation is useful, his own research suggests that the majority of those involved in terrorism had been radicalized at some point prior to violent action. In the cases involving *jihaadists*, they predominately came across radical ideas before committing acts of terror or being motivated to act out violence or join conflicts. However, there does appear to be those anomalies where there were no prior indications of individuals encountering extremists or observable signs of embracing radical ideologies, thus further demonstrating the complexity of radicalization.⁸⁴ Aside from trying to determine why people radicalize, the question remains why groups like ISIS are so efficient at recruitment and facilitating that process. The effectiveness of extremists’ messaging depends upon how they can

⁸⁴ The case of Ali Brown, who killed four people in the US claiming he was frustrated over the conflict in Syria and US policy in the Muslim world. He states, “I just wanted to do my part.” The researcher knew Ali and had contact with him a few months prior to his rampage, and at the time there were no observable traits of radicalization or influence of extremist ideology.

play upon the emotions of their target audience and this is especially true if the target audience is lacking in Islamic knowledge. Baker in his research sampling found that, “(e)vidence emanating from the sample group has pointed to the lack of religious knowledge and the effectiveness of extremist protagonists’ ability to tap into the emotional psyche of members of Muslim communities, particularly the youth due to their relatively new and either ‘*founding*’ or ‘*youthful*’ phases of development” (2009:320).

The *Salafee* Response to Radicalism

Most counter-extremism efforts take place at the government level; however, *Salafees* also play an active role in this process mainly through direct engagement with extremists. Their efforts include debating extremist ideas by presenting counter-narratives and alternative narratives. The more prominent methods *Salafees* employ are debating *jihaadists* and engaging their ideology. In contemporary times al-Albaanee was one of the most renowned *Salafee* scholars who directly engaged and debated *jihaadists*. In one such gathering a *jihaadist* supporter attempted to dispute al-Albaanee's concept of *jihaad* claiming that although his methodology was consistent with the *manhaj* of the *Salaf*, there were subtle differences. He said, "We have no doubt that you are one of the first of the scholars in the century to call for the return to the understanding of the *Salaf*. There is no doubt that the issue of jihad [*sic*] is an issue of disagreement among those who follow the *manhaj as-Salaf al-Saalih*" (salafipublications.com). The *jihaadee* then began to explain his conditions for *jihaad* and question the origins of al-Albaanee's claims. In the end, al-Albaanee demonstrated the inadequacies in the *jihaadists*' reasoning and exposed their mistakes in comprehending of the issue. The debate highlighted several important points. First, it must be noted the credibility of al-Albaanee: even his adversaries acknowledged this. Second, Al-Albaanee offered an effective positive alternative narrative to counter the *jihaadist* by emphasizing the priority of *da'wa*. Third, the counter-narrative of al-Albaanee exposed the inherent contradictions in *jihaadee* ideology and stratagem. Fourth, the debate illustrated how direct engagement from a qualified scholar with extremists

can be effective in dispelling their narratives. In another incident, *Shaikh* al-Albaanee was sought out by a group of *takfeerees* to debate his theories on *jihaad* and *takfeer*. Initially, due to the severity of their *takfeeree* ideology, they would not pray behind him. One of the participants who narrated the incident later recanted after a series of debates and discussions with al-Albaanee. *Shaikh* al-Jawaabirah relates:

the discussion continued until the *mu'addhin* [sic] made the call to prayer for *fajr*, and we were continually debating mentioning many *aayaahs* [from the Quraan] [sic] which apparently proved [our stance of] declaring Muslims to be disbelievers [*takfeer*], and likewise we would mention *hadiths* which [again], apparently, proved [the stance we had taken of] declaring those people who had committed major sins to be disbelievers. And *Shaikh* Naasir was like a towering mountain answering this proof, and explaining the objective of other proofs, and reconciling between those which on the surface seemed to be contradictory, quoting the sayings of the *Salaf* and *Imaams* who are relied upon from *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah* [sic] (albaniblog.com).

Although it is rare, some *Salafee* scholars, if they determine it is beneficial for the *da'wa*, do directly debate *jihaadees*. The purpose, they claim, is to manifest the truth, discredit extremists, and expose the flaws inherent in their logic by debunking their narrative. Al-Albaanee's counter-narratives proved to be very effective in the incident mentioned above. *Shaikh* al-Jawaabirah states that "after *Shaikh* Naasir had convinced us of the error and deviation from the [correct] methodology that we had been upon, we turned back from our *takfeeri* [sic] thinking, and all praise is due to Allaah [sic]. Except for a small group [of us]- who ended up apostatizing from Islaam [sic]" (albaniblog.com). This anecdote affirms the *Salafee* maxim that extremism leads to disbelief eventually and further highlights *Salafees'* role in producing effective counter-narratives to violent extremism and their ability to assist in the disengagement process.

Most documented *Salafee* efforts take place in writings, books, and conferences instead of direct engagement with *takfeerees*. For example, al-Hameed in his monumental work, compiled from a master's thesis, details many of the foundation

principles of ISIS and al-Qaeda. Then he highlights the relationship between the original *Khawaarij* sect and many of the contemporary *takfeeree* groups and ideologues. In his treatise he analyzes the developmental stages of many of the groups highlighting their participation in modern-day conflicts involving Muslims. The author further introduces some of the leading contemporary *jihaadee* figures, critiques their ideology, offers counter arguments, and extensively documents their methodological contraventions (2015). By analyzing al-Hameed's discussion of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdasee, a leading *takfeeree* ideologue, the following points can be observed:

- he refutes al-Maqdasee's ideology with statements of classical scholars to debunk his paradigm,
- he refutes several of his edicts of *takfeer* by using *sharee'a* based evidences and statements of classical and contemporary scholars,
- and he uses anecdotes and testimonials of a former colleague of al-Maqdasee to question his credibility.

Overall, al-Hameed's refutation provided a well-constructed convincing argument; however, it is difficult to determine how well received it is by the target audience, which is the only way to determine its effectiveness. Historically, *Salafees* have been pro-active in confronting extremists and engaging their ideals compared to their sectarian counterparts. As was illustrated elsewhere in this research, *Salafees* devote a significant portion of their lectures, lessons, and debates to presenting counter-narratives and alternative narratives to extremist ideology. For example, sahab.net a well-known *Salafee* Arabic website had over 845 postings with articles and audio lectures arguing against terrorism and extremist ideology. Many of the articles contained refutations of specific *takfeeree* ideologues and groups by rebutting their various religious edicts supporting violence. An analysis of some of the postings on the forum is forthcoming.

There is an ongoing discussion in the academic community over whether *Salafees* are better suited to refute *takfeeree* extremists or not. This is probably because

many of the severely polemic debates used to counter extremist rhetoric come from *Salafees*. While surveying *Salafee* texts two main reasons become apparent for their extensive counter-narrative campaign and messaging. First, since a fundamental tenet of *Salafism* is to discern and refute heretical groups and ideologies, then it seems within reason that *Salafees* would devote extensive time and effort in distinguishing their *da'wa* and discrediting *takfeeree* extremists. Second, there are practical reasons for rebuking extremism since *Salafism* is often cited as the core ideology behind violent Islamic extremism. Also, as was shown earlier in the study, some of the primary sources of *Salafism* are often misinterpreted to espouse and justify violence. Many *takfeeree* ideologues tend to reference classical sources to bolster their *manhaj* and credentials as being *Salafee*. However, even with this being the case many of their contemporary references, like Syed Qutb, who *Salafees* vehemently oppose, differ dramatically with the *manhaj* of contemporary *Salafee* scholars (Green 2009). Although *Salafees* and some of the extremist groups discussed in this research may share some overlapping theological points of reference that does not necessitate *Salafees* being extremist or advocating violence.

There is both a positive and negative to having some shared tenets between *takfeerees* and *Salafees*. As several researchers observe, *Salafees* appear to be better positioned to offer a credible counter-narrative to extremist arguments. However, a negative aspect of those alleged similarities is that it allows for easy transition for weak *Salafees* to extremism. For example, a *Salafee* that engages in debates and discussions, but is ill prepared to defend his or her *manhaj* can be swayed by *jihaadist* arguments. Olidort claims *Salafees* and *jihaadists* “are all composed of the same theological DNA. They base themselves on texts and concepts developed over centuries by communities of established Muslim scholars... It is therefore not a big conceptual leap to go from quietism to jihadism [sic]” (McCants and Olidort 2015:1). However, contrary to McCants and Olidort’s assessment there are several case studies which illustrate the contrary: there is substantially more movement towards *Salafism* by *Jihaadists*. Baker observes,

“Indeed, such data is supported by Sean O’Reilly’s case study account of the stagnation in learning he initially experienced followed by his gravitation from the violent extremist narrative towards Salafism. It is therefore prudent to assume that the respondents from the sample group ... are progressing in a similar manner to the rest of their cohort” (2009:320). Baker’s research results indicate that transitioning to radicalism is multi-facetted. In his conclusion he drew correlations between religious maturity and ideological orientation, to the process of radicalization. Also, Baker found that the radicalization of *Salafees* in mature stages of religious development did not pose an impending threat, but rather some extremists were more inclined to embrace *Salafism*. Again, Baker asserts, “The question of susceptibility to extremist propaganda, judging by what has transpired during the case studies and interviews depends on a multiplicity of factors related to socio-economic, socio-political, socio-religious and psychological drivers which serve to affect or influence the psyche of Muslim converts at both pre and post conversion stages of their lives” (2009: 321). Radicalization is a complex process, and as Baker’s research suggests ideology, socio-economic factors, and one’s religious maturity all play a role in determining whether one is susceptible to violent extremist propaganda or not. Still, even though radicalization is a complicated undertaking *Salafees* appear to be the most suited to attend to the phenomena and the less likely to transition from *Salafism* to violent *jihaadism*.

Academic Cynics

For some, the premise of *Salafism* as an antidote requires further scrutiny because some *takfeerees* reference *Salafee* scholars and selectively choose religious edicts that appear to validate their discourse. Since some academics claim that *Salafees* share a common theology as *takfeeree* groups, the implication of that supposition is that it is not a large step for a *Salafee* to become radicalized. However, according to this research premise and the evidence cited, this does not seem to be the case, but instead *Salafees* appear to offer constructive arguments to counter-radicalization due to some of their commonly shared beliefs. Qadhi claims, “Pacifist

Salafism” is one of the best tools to counter radicalism. He also asserts that true analysis of the problem of radicalism must be addressed by responding to alleged grievances of the Muslim world in general, and radicals more specifically, to find solutions to the formidable challenge of radicalism (Qadhi and McCants 2015). Although Qadhi admits *Salafees* offer the most daunting defiance to *jihaadists* he is still cynical of *Salafee* government partnerships.

Western governments and the intelligence community are mostly skeptical, with few exceptions, of partnering with *Salafees* or any Islamic groups that promote political activism or have beliefs, which appear leery of core democratic values. They view *Salafees* and Islamists with suspicion and see them as problematic. They further argue, “governments should not legitimize and empower them with any form of partnership. The long-term repercussions on social cohesion and integration of such engagement, they add, would be much greater than the yet-to-be-proven short-term gains than can be achieved in preventing acts of terrorism” (Vindino 2009:63). Vindino goes on to advocate that the greater the terror threat to a country has a causal relationship with its willingness to cooperate with actors that it normally views as disagreeable, in other words, “the higher the terrorist threat, the lower the bar of partner acceptability is set” (2009:65). The skepticism of Western secular states is understandable; however, evidence does not support the transitioning of non-violent *Salafees* to becoming violent extremists. However, the prevailing consensus and main argument of skeptics is that there is real tension and conflict of interests in partnering with undemocratic groups. Vindino claims, “If success in counter radicalization is deemed to be the marginalization of extremist and anti-integration ideas among young European Muslims, then many believe that partnering with nonviolent Islamists is counterproductive” (2009:71).

There are a variety of criticisms of *Salafism* and moreover partnering with *Salafees* when it comes to counter-extremism policy. Some pundits suggest that *Salafee* thought is not politically mature and the behavior of the Saudi regime has contributed to the evolution of *jihaadists*. “Jihadi-salafism [*sic*] was thus a rejection

of the original quietist version, which was seen by jihadis [*sic*] as inadequate to rectify the “un-Islamic” state of affairs of the Saudi kingdom and the wider Arab and Muslim world. To a great extent, jihadi-Salafis [*sic*] chose armed struggle as the approach to political change because the quietists offered no political program” (Bokhari and McCants 2015:3). Bokhari also observes that this absence of a political strategy serves to hamper *Salafees*’ efforts to disengage radicals, who view the *Salafee manhaj* as impractical for rectifying society or the ails of the *umma*. Other critics argue that *Salafees* are not truly static regarding political activism, and that conflicts, politics, and civil strife can all effect their stance towards political involvement, so that inevitably *Salafees* are unpredictable as pacifists. Factors such as a change in domestic politics, tyranny, religious suppression, and war, all influence political activism and a movement’s stance towards violence. Case studies in various conflict zones such as Bosnia, Iraq, Syria, Burma, Kashmir and Afghanistan have all challenged the *Salafee* clerics’ position regarding violence. For some pundits this only underscores the fact that *Salafees* are selectively quietists and they share many *jihadist* causes. However, this researcher suggests that what defines *Salafees* is their adherence to *Salafist* principles and that the *sharee’a* permits varied stances to varying realities without diminishing or subverting core religious principles like the response to tyrannous rulers or principles governing when *jihad* is legislated as an institution. Therefore, the fact that a *Salafee* cleric or body of scholars issues a decree of defensive *jihad* for instance, does not equate to the wanton use of force and violent edicts issued by *jhaadee* clerics. However, Wagemakers observes, “If one adopts the concepts, methods and basic assumptions of Salafism as a framework of reasoning, the radicals’ theological arguments may not come across as being quite as preposterous as some quietist Salafis [*sic*] would have us believe” (Wagemakers and McCants 2015:3). Another common criticism of partnering with *Salafees* in counter extremism efforts is that extremists share their overall paradigm and that an unintended consequence of their messaging is that it may push the target audience closer to violent radicalism. While this is not entirely untenable, the gravitation towards extremism is usually the result of either weak counter-messaging or because the overall worldview of

jihadees and *Salafees* has similarities, therefore radicals may not be sufficiently persuaded to abandon violence especially when they are not adequately grounded in *Salafist* principles or founding youthful phase of development.

Another claim made against *Salafees* is that their unwillingness to integrate into their host societies by rejecting core democratic ideas makes them prime candidates for fostering extremism. This is a common criticism expressed in Western societies. Vindino claims, while *Salafees* may reject radicalism and violent ideologies “they simultaneously play the role of arsonists, pushing a message that plays on the separate identity of Muslims as well as the alleged persecution to which Muslims are subjected in Europe and justifying violence in other circumstances” (2009:72). This critique was directed specifically at politically engaged groups like the Muslim Brotherhood; however, *Salafees* were included in his criticism. The logic goes that since *Salafees* and other groups reject democracy and some of the widely accepted values and norms of the West that they are radical themselves and give credence to the ideology espoused by violent extremists withholding the vehemence. In addition, by having dialogue with groups considered radical, even if they do not espouse violence, is giving them a pulpit to advocate their counter-cultural views. Also, it is giving them legitimacy as actors to partner with in counter extremism and subverting more moderate modernist views by giving preference to those who, in their view, are untenable. Maher and Frampton state in their critique of those who partner with *Salafees* and Islamists in preventing violent extremism (PVE),

The central theoretical flaw in PVE is that it accepts the premise that non-violent extremists can be made to act as bulwarks against violent extremists. Some within government and the police service believe that only nonviolent radicals – otherwise known as ‘political Islamists’ – possess the necessary ‘street cred’ to control angry young Muslims. Genuine Muslim moderates are regularly dismissed by key authority figures as ‘spoken for’, and thus marginalized [*sic*]. Non-violent extremists have consequently become well dug in as partners of national and local government and the police. Some of the government’s chosen collaborators in ‘addressing grievances’ of angry young Muslims are themselves at the forefront of stoking those grievances against British

foreign policy; western social values; and alleged state-sanctioned 'Islamophobia' [sic] (2009:5).

It appears, according to the logic of Maher and Frampton, that partnering with those that consistently have shown they are more effective in countering the narratives of violent *jihaadists* is unacceptable, primarily due to political reasons and the concerns that *Salafees* may simply be latent *jihaadists*, and profoundly extreme. However, Lambert castigates those who criticized his work at the MCU and the partnerships forged with *Salafees* by saying, "Muslim partners are being re-cast as Muslim suspects and Muslim informants by influential academics and think-tanks" (2013:256). While their concerns should be acknowledged and are not entirely irrational, academics and think tanks should be at the forefront of research and sound academic conclusions based upon analysis of existing trends within *Salafism*. Most of the critics of counter-extremist partnerships attempt to undermine any efforts that involve, what they deem, as undesirable partners. Maher and Frampton conclude, "PVE is thus underwriting the very Islamist ideology which spawns an illiberal, intolerant and anti-western world view. Political and theological extremists, acting with the authority conferred by official recognition, are indoctrinating young people with an ideology of hostility to western values" (2009:5). According to Maher and Frampton the approach of partnering with 'non-violent radicals' is both flawed in theory and practice, because it courts those who contradict many mainstream values and morays, although they may not openly espouse violence in Western societies. They further argue that these contradictions should not be tolerated as they contrast with the political culture of the host society and accommodate groups and individuals that have the latent propensity for violence.

This strategic error on the part of officialdom is born of a poverty of aspiration: the belief of the authorities that they cannot reasonably ask angry Muslims for much more than a pledge not to use violence in Britain. The effect has been to empower reactionaries within Muslim communities and to marginalise genuine moderates, thus increasing inter-community tensions and envenoming the public space (Maher and Frampton 2009:5).

Proponents

In contrast, there are those in academia who allege *Salafees* speak the same theological language as extremists, so they are generally better equipped to be an antidote to their narratives. Mubin acknowledges that *Salafees* vociferously oppose violent extremists and Western governments can capitalize on their counter-narratives. “ISIS and quietist Salafis [*sic*] do share an intellectual genealogy. But in contrast to most quietist Salafis [*sic*], ISIS’s violent worldview springs from the political realities of Iraq and the views of Saddam-era Baathists who make up the top echelons of ISIS” (McCants and Mubin 2015:2). This statement supports the growing realization of some academics that *Salafees* can, and do, play a role in offering counter-narratives to extremist messaging. Furthermore, Mubin’s assessment implicates the role of politics in influencing extremists’ rhetoric and violent worldview, while at the same time highlighting *Salafees*’ general pacifism. Baker affirms:

it is increasingly acknowledged among statutory bodies and security services that those most effective in countering violent extremism are grassroot communities that understand the psychology and ideology of extremist groups and have experience/expertise in tackling them. Nevertheless, the question of susceptibility to extremism remains and it is the researcher’s summation that so long as new converts, regardless of their respective ages of conversion, are engaged with from an ideological and methodological standpoint during the ‘*founding*’ and ‘*youthful*’ phases of development where they are most susceptible, the risk of and exposure to violent radicalisation/extremism [*sic*] can be effectively reduced (2009:324).

The radicalization process is an entirely complex and perplexing phenomenon: however, *Salafees* exhibit the most potent counter-narrative and are the most effective in countering this process and interrupting its stages. *Salafees* understand the *takfeeree* creed, methodology, and use some of the same terminology and concepts. Again, Mubin concedes “Quietist Salafis [*sic*] can (and do) openly and vociferously oppose ISIS’ interpretation of Islamic texts and dispute its use of Islamic scripture and scholarship” (McCants and Mubin 2015:2). In contrast,

Moderates have no influence over potential *jihadists* nor can they offer credible counter arguments to the radical narrative (McCants and Mubin 2015:2). Moderates generally do not speak the same language as *takfeeree* extremists, nor do they possess the credibility, as *Salafees* per se, to confront extremists.⁸⁵ In fact, many *Salafee* students actively study classical and contemporary texts that refute *takfeeree* ideology. A former Central Intelligence Agency official Reuel Marc Gerecht stated, “Muslim ‘moderates’ can’t defeat bin Ladenism since they don’t speak to the same audience with the same language and passions” (Vidino 2009:62). Although ideology alone does not account for the rise of violent extremism, this research asserts that it is a primary cause even though it “should not be the sole focus of interventions. Many Muslims hold serious grievances (both perceived and real) that also need to be addressed. But Quietist Salafis [*sic*] can be very effective at persuading youth to consider more constructive approaches to political change” (McCants and Mubin 2015:3).

Another important observation made during this research is that *Salafees*’ abstinence from democratic participation does not mean they disrespect its institutions, or more importantly, call to violence, even though *Salafism*, in principle, is at odds with liberal democratic ideas. Mubin states, “I’d rather have young Muslim Salafi [*sic*] types who don’t vote or don’t believe in voting than have those who think terrorism is in any way legitimate in Islam” (McCants and Mubin 2015:3).⁸⁶ Most of the empirical data and literature presented in this research indicate that *Salafee* mosques, *da’wa* centers, and organizations are not fertile grounds for terrorist recruitment. Instead, *Salafees* tend to be at the forefront of presenting counter-narratives and rebuttals to extremist messaging. “With the exception of Finsbury Mosque, no empirical evidence exists of any other registered mosques ever being taken over or administered by violent extremists” (Baker 2009:326). *Salafees*, for

⁸⁵The discourse of many academics and scholars of other Islamic traditions is inconsistent with the discourse used by many of the extremists and thus they are viewed as lacking credibility and therefore respect. In order to effectively engage extremist arguments it is important that those who attempt to do so have some sort of credibility to the extremists.

⁸⁶ A growing number of non-*Salafee*, and even non-Muslim academics acknowledge that *Salafism* may not be inclusive as a movement, but it is generally not a threat. Also, there is increasing acknowledgement that *Salafees* tend to offer strong counter extremist messaging.

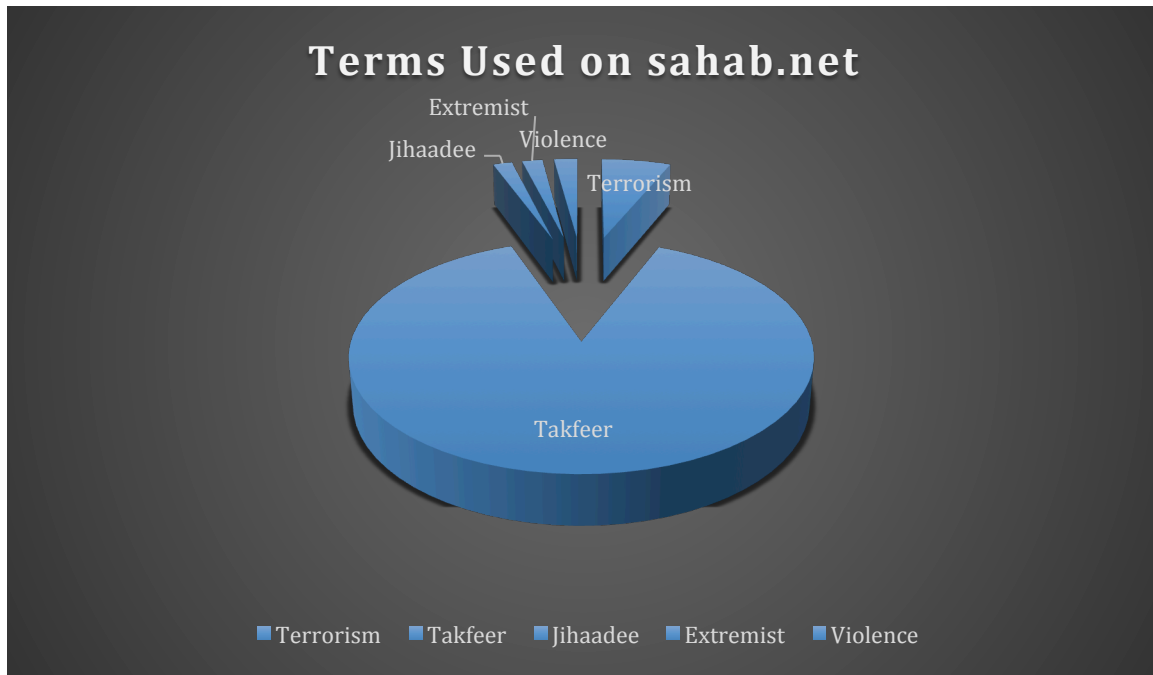
some like McCants, Brachman, and Felter, may not be ideal partners in governmental counter-terrorism efforts; however, they acknowledge their counter-narratives to *jihadee* discourse may be the most effective.

Finally, a word about “moderate” Muslims. The measure of moderation depends on what type of standard you use. If by “moderate” one means the renouncement of violence in the achievement of political goals, then the majority of Salafis [*sic*] are moderate. But if by “moderate” one means an acceptance of secularism, capitalism, democracy, gender equality, and a commitment to religious pluralism, then Salafis [*sic*] would be extremists on all counts. Then again, there are not many Muslim religious leaders in the Middle East that would qualify as moderates according to the second definition. Until there are, the international community should focus on alienating Jihadis[*sic*] from the broader Salafi [*sic*] Movement. While it may be distasteful to work with non-violent Salafi [*sic*] leaders, they are best positioned to delegitimize Jihadi [*sic*] violence (2006:11).

Case Study of Sahab.net

In this section *Salafee* discourse and counter-narratives will be examined to highlight existing *Salafee* efforts in countering extremists. The case study of sahab.net, a renowned online *Salafee* forum dedicated to propagating the *Salafee da'wa* will be assessed for its role in disseminating counter-narratives. Although the website is not wholly dedicated to refuting extremists, it does offer a vast number of postings that deal with counter-extremism topics while promoting some of the well-known Saudi *Salafee* scholars and their verdicts. Sahab.net has countless posts from forum participants and transcriptions of verdicts, and audio lectures of *Salafee* scholars discussing controversial topics such as *jihad*, *takfeer* and terrorism. For instance, in a search for the term terrorism, generally used on the site to refer to violent *jihadee* activities, 386 entries appeared, the term *takfeer* produced over 5,535 entries, with *jihadee* producing 106 entries, and the word extremist had 114 entries. Finally, there were 130 entries referencing the term violence. Most of the entrees referenced violent extremists, rebuttals of their ideologies, or *Salafees'* stance regarding the use of violence.

Chart One:



The pie chart documenting frequently used terms to reference extremism and radical activities, shows that *Salafees* that use the sahib.net forum most are concerned with ideological deviance from *Salafist* principles with the notion of *takfeer* being the most prominent concept being discussed. While terrorism and the use of violence were also discoursed along with distorted conceptions of *jihad* by violent groups, the data overwhelmingly suggests *Salafees* are most concerned with creed and methodological issues which contravene their beliefs.

Many of the articles and lectures posted on sahab.net offer clarifications of the *Salafee manhaj*, distinguish *Salafees* from violent extremist ideologies, and chronicle the development of contemporary *jihadee* movements. What this indicates is that *Salafees* are active in disseminating counter messaging and cognizant of the dangers present in *jihadist* ideals. The implication for *Salafees* is that if they do not become proactive in denouncing extremism they risk further being associated with radicalism. However, it must be noted that these discussions only take place between *Salafees*; there is no cross-spectrum engagement of ideas,

which results in mainly affirmation of *Salafee* messaging. Many of the online forums, especially *Salafee* ones, are simply communities consisting of individuals of the same *manhaj*.

As was detailed earlier in this study, *Salafees* devote a considerable amount of their writings to denouncing those whom they deem to be deviant in *manhaj*, with refutations against *jihaadee-takfeeree* ideologues taking precedence. By taking a random sampling of three separate posts from sahab.net it was hoped that this might offer insight into how *Salafee* forums address the issue of extremist thought and if counter-radicalism strategies were involved. During the sample of three posts several observations were made. In the first post entitled: *The Dangers of Pronouncing Takfeer Prematurely*, the forum participant posted a *fatwa* of the Committee of Major Scholars that included:

- a clarification of *takfeer* as a *sharee'a* based principle,
- the exemplification of the dangers associated with adopting *takfeer* as an ideology and its heretical nature,
- emphasis on the preservation of lives and property, with discussions about the consequences of extremism, both material and ideological,
- and the sinfulness and injustice inherent to *takfeeree* ideology and its violation of integral *sharee'a* principles (accessed 2/10/2018).

The post mainly consisted of a posting of the *fatwa*, which was primarily intended to offer counter messaging to *takfeeree* discourse by showing that the actions of extremist groups are inconsistent with *sharee'a* ethics and concepts. Also, it emphasized the negative consequences of acting upon heretical ideologies. The *fatwa* could be characterized as offering a counter-narrative to extremist thought with a focus on correcting the distortion of Islamic principles, and providing an alternative message used to undermine their narrative. In the second post: *Al-Qaeda the Khawaarij*, the author highlighted:

- the link between the early sect and the contemporary group
- the difference between the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna*, the *Khawarij*, and al-Qaeda,
- the role of classical scholarship and texts rebuking the various *Khawarij* sects,
- and contemporary *Salafee* scholars' position about the development of the *takfeeree* ideology (accessed 2/10/2018).

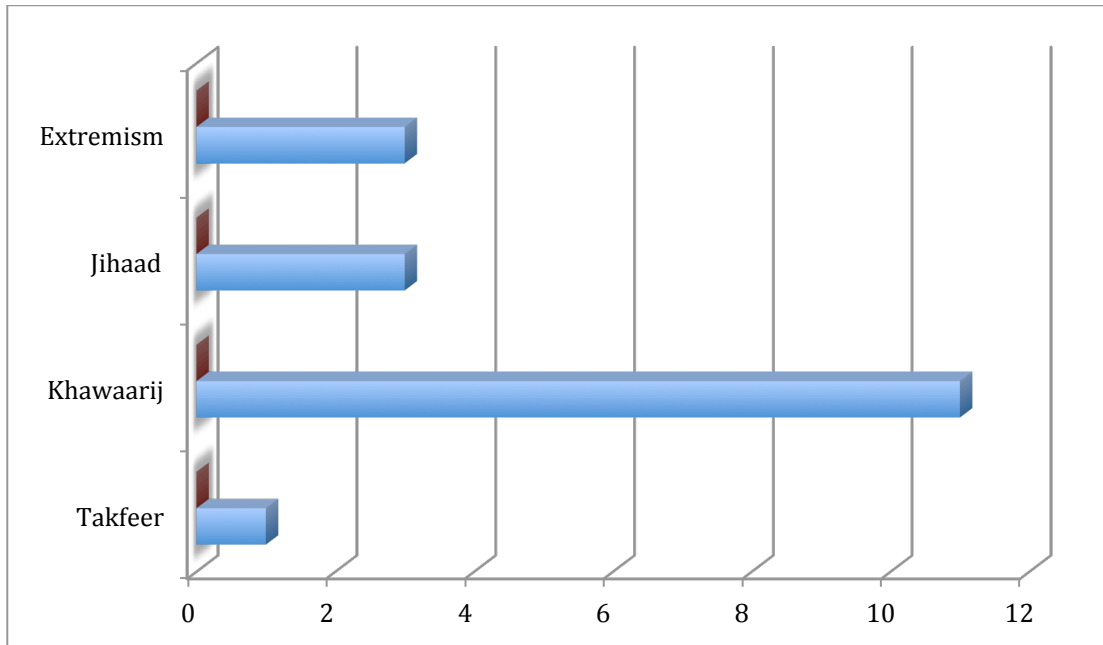
The author of this post mainly dealt with the historical development of the *takfeeree* ideology by distinguishing between the *Salafee* position and the *takfeeree* paradigm throughout history. This post seemed to be more directed at debunking extremist ideology by introducing both historic and contemporary scholarship. In the third post, *Salafees are Free from Terrorist Actions*, the writer:

- characterizes the actions of suicide bombings and car bombings as un-Islamic, terror inspired actions,
- describes violent extremists as ignorant, young, and heretical by seeking to undermine their credibility,
- also he clarifies the *takfeeree* creed while mentioning contemporary figureheads of the ideology from Syed Qutb to bin Laden to discredit their ideology.

Like the other posts sampled in this research it sought to undermine the credibility of *jihadee* and *takfeeree* figureheads by emphasizing the loss of life and dire consequences of acting upon *jihadee* messaging. Also, the analysis sought to undermine the integrity of highly influential *jihadee* figureheads. This post seemed to be the most comprehensive in both offering counter-narratives and an alternative narrative by focusing on *da'wa* as the means for rectifying Muslim grievances rather than violence. Finally, most of the postings surveyed on sahab.net are replete with calls questioning and diminishing the credibility of *takfeerees* by refuting their

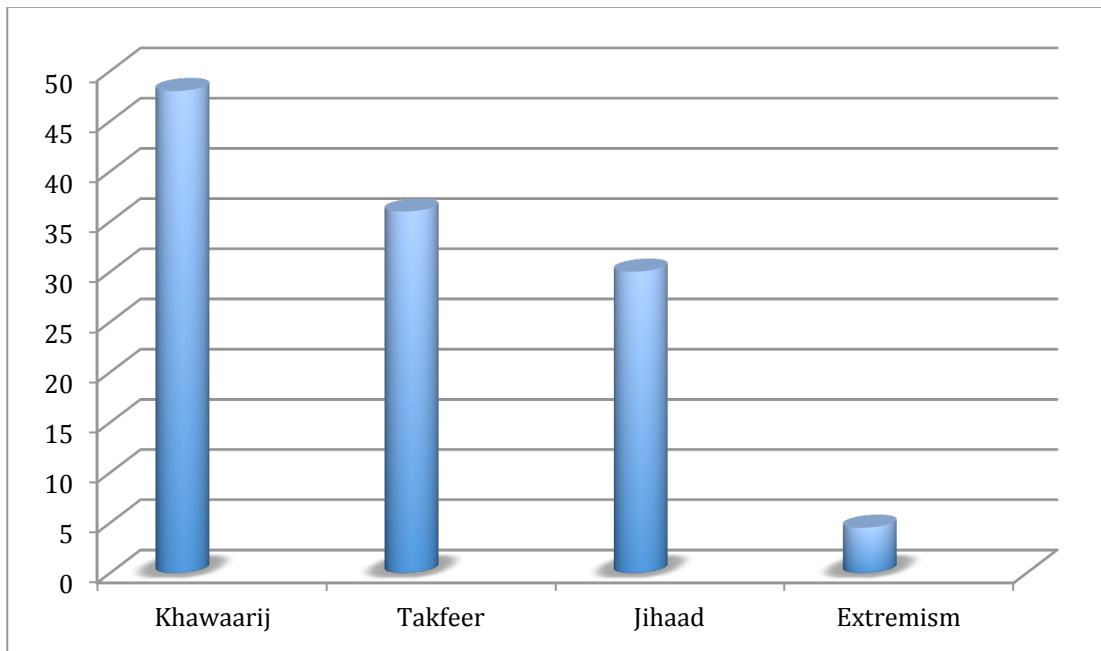
ideology and offering alternative narratives on how to rectify creed through sound Islamic knowledge and *da'wa*, which implies that *Salafees* do have a strong role in producing counter-narratives to extremist rhetoric.

Miraath.net: Audio Lectures



Another popular *Salafee* website that contains a multitude of lectures from *Salafee* scholars is miraath.net. Roughly 27% of site's audio lectures are dedicated to issues of *takfeer*, *jihad*, and extremism. Most of the lectures devoted to these topics are repudiations of violent extremist ideology and clarifications of the *Salafee* approach to *jihad* and *takfeer*, similar to their English *Salafee* counterparts. This shows that refuting extremists is a fairly consistent pillar of the *Salafee manhaj* and both the English and Arabic language websites confront these issues. A significant amount of the material uploaded to the website, twenty seven percent, offered rebuttals to *takfeeree* extremists, which is fairly significant for a website that has only been in existence for less than five years. This is in contrast to the many non-*Salafee* websites that do not engage in discussions of similar themes. This is perhaps due to *Salafees'* concerns with, as they view it, preserving orthodoxy and proactively repudiating heterodoxy.

Drosq8.com: Number of Audio/Video Lectures



Drosq8.com is a Kuwaiti based *Salafee* website with over four thousand audio and video lectures dedicated to a wide range of Islamic topics and research primarily from Kuwaiti scholars. About twenty nine percent of the audio video content is devoted to refuting *Khawaarij*, issues related to *takfeer* and correcting misconceptions about *jihaad*, as well as denouncing extremism.

The dedication to controversial topics such as *jihaad* and *takfeer* appears to be a consistent trend amongst *Salafee* websites, which highlights the fact that they are persistent in addressing extremism. It may be possible to conclude that *Salafees'* efforts have an effect on potential extremist actors; however, it is difficult to measure quantitatively as was discussed previously. *Salafees* take a concerted approach to repudiating extremists, because for them it is a religious obligation to refute what they deem are aberrations that threaten orthodoxy and the *da'wa* efforts. To *Salafees*, these are methodological differences between them and *jihaadist* groups that must be addressed, highlighted, and disproved. These refutations are

not a part of a government sponsored program or at the behest of policy think tanks, rather they are intrinsic to the *Salafee manhaj* and that is why there is a large amount of consistency in lectures, research, books, and websites devoted to these topics. Even the data collected from the small sampling of *Salafee* websites, three English websites and three in Arabic, were consistent in showing that approximately one fourth to one third of *Salafee* material analyzed details and repudiates extremist ideology.

Aside from websites numerous books have been authored to counter extremist messaging. In a monumental work entitled, *Taleeya al-Hiwaar al Daarij beina Sunna wa al-Khawaarij*, by *Shaikh* ‘Abdul Maalik Ramadaanee, the author set out to debunk 75 documented claims of the *takfeeree* groups around the subject of the caliphate, *jihaad*, and *takfeer*. The author meticulously details the most common claims of the *takfeerees*, their logic and conventions for determining an edict, and their comprehension of textual evidences. Then he proceeds to discredit and repudiate their arguments. The book itself was written as a dialogue between *Salafees* and *takfeerees* and was compiled over several years of research adapted from a prior lecture delivered by the *Shaikh*. A distinguishable trait of the work was that a large “group of those who listened to the lecture claimed that it was the reason for their guidance to the *mathab* of *Ahl Sunna* [sic] regarding dealing with the leader and leaving the *mathab* [sic] of the fickle minded, irrational, and blood thirsty” (2017:8). According to the author’s account, many youths in Algeria who were previously aligned with *jihaadee* groups were affected by his lecture. The lecture challenged their prior premise regarding the government and the ideology of *takfeer*. In one example, *Shaikh* Ramadaanee mentions the premise of many contemporary *takfeerees*, who claim to follow the *Salaf*, which is that the modern-day leaders are oppressive and differ with the righteous leadership of the Companions. Therefore, according to their claim, governments lack religiosity and violate the *sharee’a*, which in turn nullifies their right to be obeyed and invalidates their social contract. The *Shaikh* then confers how their logic contradicts the *sharee’a*, by stating, “they judge in accordance with their (limited) intellectual

capacity and emotionalism in contradiction to the authenticated divine texts” (2017:16). This statement of the *Shaikh*, although simplistic, resonates with the target audience who pride themselves as being adherent to the dictates of *sharee’a*. His statement also questions their claim to legitimacy by showing they do not adhere to *sharee’a* commandments, nor do they refer to clearly expounded upon tenets of Islamic law, but instead rely upon logic. The *Shaikh’s* assertion discredits their flawed logic by illustrating the contradiction of the *takfeeree* premise: the leaders are apostate and must be fought. His account illustrates the effectiveness of his preaching and counter-narrative in disrupting the radicalization process. Through providing counter-narratives to the doubts of the youths by using *sharee’a*-based arguments the *Shaikh’s* credibility was solidified as a proficient Islamic scholar. The veracity of the *takfeeree* claims was tried by first establishing the *Shaikh’s* integrity and then through the legitimacy of his argumentation. The *Shaikh* provides a strong, effective counter-narrative, thus disrupting the radicalization process as attested by those who abandoned their former ideology. Debunking their edicts of *takfeer* and undermining their claims of the legality of rebellion were important in establishing the *Shaikh’s* credibility. What makes *Shaikh* Ramadaanee’s book so effective is that he disputes the *takfeeree* claims point by point offering solid textual evidences while highlighting the inherent politicization of their arguments. In addition, he was able to show that their arguments consisted mainly of conjecture lacking the necessary *sharee’a* based evidences and messaging that resonates with the target audience.

Jihaadists are effective in packaging their message, so it is crucial that *Salafees* can counter their stratagem. Some of the known recruitment tactics of *jihaadists*, as identified by Briggs and Fever, are that they create a sense of duty by extolling the rewards of *jihaad* and promoting a sense of victimhood (2014). *Shaikh* Ramadaanee, in his book, addresses those methods by emphasizing that the greatest sense of duty is reformation to reconcile the challenges faced by the *umma*, which is brought about by returning to the core principles of the faith. *Shaikh* Ramadaanee’s lecture engages the target audience primarily through introducing

facts and critiquing *takfeeree* ideology. Many youths that are targeted by extremist groups tend to incline to a more literal understanding of Islam, which also makes them susceptible to the *Salafee da'wa*. *Shaikh* Ramadaanee's message was effective at moving those inclined towards violence to a more pacifist *Salafee* perspective. This illustrates both the effectiveness of a strong counter-narrative and a stratagem that assists in disengaging extremists.

Conclusion

Consistent with the findings of this study, *Salafees* seem to have the most clear-cut and operative strategy for addressing extremism. This chapter began by introducing some of the main theorems of how extremists recruit by analyzing the radicalization process. The results of that analysis reveal that radicalization is a perplexing process attributable to a multitude of factors such as psychological development and socio-political factors, which all make the target audience more susceptible to *jihadist* recruitment and violent extremism. As the evidence confirms groups like ISIS are extremely effective at producing cogent narratives as shown by their ability to persuade and recruit foreign fighters from around the world to support their cause.

Also, during this chapter the question of what comprises an effective counter-narrative was explored. It was determined that the credibility of the messenger, quality of counter messaging and audience retention were all key factors in determining a message's effectiveness as in the case of *Shaikh* al-Albaanee's engagement with extremists and *Shaikh* Ramadaanee's lecture. In addition, one of the desired effects of counter-narratives and positive messaging is to encourage violent radicals and those inclined towards violence to disengage. The *Salafee* method uses powerful counter messaging as an antidote to radicalization and extremism; in addition, *Salafees* tend to be more ideologically sophisticated and capable of understanding contemporary *jhaadee* paradigms. The observations made over the course of this chapter show that *Salafees* tend to be more proactive in their counter extremist messaging, also they are considered to be the most

credible amongst target audiences to address radicalization and are closer in ideological proximity than many other groups. Baker observes, “it is increasingly acknowledged among statutory bodies and security services that those most effective in countering violent extremism are grassroot communities that understand the psychology and ideology of extremist groups and have experience/expertise in tackling them” (2009:323). Baker’s research also illustrates the process of radicalization from a convert’s perspective by detailing specifically the stages many converts to Islam traverse while being radicalized.

In addition, this chapter also included critics of *Salafism* and cynics of their efforts to produce effective counter-narratives. Cynics mostly questioned *Salafees*’ role as potential partners in countering violent extremism. On the other hand, critics were largely skeptical of *Salafism* as a methodology for understanding Islam and generally regard it as a radical ideology.

Finally, this chapter concluded by assessing some of the proponents of *Salafees*’ role in counter radicalization by analyzing some of their arguments and by supplementing case studies taken from well-known *Salafee* websites. This was done in order to illustrate the importance of *Salafees*’ online presence in confuting radical discourse and ideology.

Chapter Six: Research Conclusions

Ideology is fundamental to any movement; however, *Salafism* claims to be distinct from any secular ideology, with a literalist methodology based upon the orthodox Islamic tradition. This research has shown that the roots of *Salafism* are derived from the original textual sources of Islam: the Qur'an and *Sunna*, and the concepts espoused by the Companions. This more literalist approach is primarily associated with that of *Ahl al-Hadeeth*. This research set out to investigate *Salafism* as an antidote to extremism by exploring the contemporary rise of extremist movements such as al-Qaeda and ISIS and how they compare to the *Salafist* tradition. This comparison was made for three primary reasons. First, because *Salafism* is usually attributed as the underlying ideology of contemporary extremist Muslim groups by academics and policy pundits. Secondly, the comparison between the various trends warranted attention and analysis because of the researcher's pre-existing knowledge of *Salafees'* orientation and approach towards countering extremists within the broad spectrum of Islamic movements. Also, there is a necessity to highlight *Salafee* efforts and measure their effectiveness in producing counter-narratives to extremist discourse. *Salafees*, regardless of their location, are connected by a consistent set of principles and methodology, best illustrated by the various locations surveyed during the course of this study. Even in case studies carried out in Nigeria, the data seems fairly consistent, showing that *Salafees* are consistent in their creed and methodological approach to extremism. "Given the widespread association of Salafism with radicalism and violent extremism, many will be surprised to learn that Nigerian Salafis [*sic*] have vigorously opposed violent extremism" (Umar 2018:1). Third, an important part of this study was to elucidate the *Salafee manhaj* from an insider's perspective and explore the possibility that some of the claimants to *Salafism* and trends associated with it are in fact alien to the *Salafee manhaj*. It seems appropriate to reiterate, as cited in chapter one, a well-known axiom of *fiqh*: *the reality lies in substance not in a name* when considering the diverse trends associated with *Salafism*.

In chapter one of this thesis the origins of *Salafism* were traced, and its core tenets defined as characterized by *Salafee* scholars. Key components of the *Salafee* creed were explored such as *tawheed*, faith, and methodological considerations. The *Salafee da'wa* is based largely upon the efforts of the movement to restore and defend the original creed, *fiqh*, and general sciences of Islam as articulated by the Companions. This rigid methodology based upon a more literal approach to interpreting the Qur'an and *Sunna* traces much of its tradition to *Ahl al-Hadeeth*. The evidence presented in chapter one clearly suggests that *Salafee* scholars view their creed and methods as being orthodox and they reference core Islamic texts and classical scholarship to substantiate their claim. The *Salafee* approach bases much of its credence upon making direct use of the Qur'an and *Sunna* as the primary sources and references for Islam. Therefore, in the *Salafee* creed emphasis is placed upon judgments being firmly rooted in the primary sources rather than speculative, secular or unorthodox methods. The *Salafee* view is that the religion is complete and requires no additional sources, which might lead to aberrations in Islam. This also highlights why *Salafees* appear obsessed with *bid'a* and refuting the sectarian traditions of *Ahl al-Kalaam* and other sects that differ with their methodology of textual interpretation.

An important fact that was learned while analyzing data for this chapter was that although *Salafees*, and in fact the *Salaf*, have uniform stances rebuking *bid'a* in general and *Ahl al-Kalaam* specifically, some well-known scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna* engaged rather actively with *Ahl al-Kalaam* while fiercely debating their arguments by using their terminologies and language. Ibn Rajab (died 795 *Hijra*) states:

Groups among the *Imaams* of the Hadith [*sic*] scholars, those of them who had memorized (the Qur'an), and their jurists used to love the Shaykh (ibn Taymiyya) [*sic*] and deem him great. However, they did not love his deep involvement with the Kalam [*sic*] theologians and the philosophers. In this, they followed the way of the *Imaams* of the early Hadith [*sic*] scholars, such as al-Shafii, Ahmad, Ishaq, Abu 'Ubayd (al-Qasim ibn Sallam) and those like them (Hoover and Mahajne 2018:45).

Ibn Taimeeya's unique method of engagement seemed like an anomaly that challenged the *Salafee* premise that *Ahl al-Sunna* or the *Salaf* had a single methodological approach to all affairs of the religion. However, after further analysis it became noteworthy that *Salafee* scholars would potentially address this claim in one of two ways. First, that the methods used by Ibn Taimeeya to address the problem of religious aberrations and those considered heretics by *Salafees*, does not actually conflict with the overall methods of the *Salaf* and that he was critical in rebuking those sects; nonetheless he chose to engage more proactively through strong scholarship and analysis of their methods illustrating the strength of his *ijtihaad*. This appears to differ from many of the recorded narrations of the *Salaf* and treatises they authored openly rebuking *Ahl al-Kalaam* without deeply engaging in their ideological premises. Second, as was discussed early in the research that if there was a question of a mistake in Ibn Taimeeya's approach that would not expel him from the *manhaj* but would be attributable to his slight alternative approach and interpretation to the codified methods of the *Salaf* in dealing with *Ahl al-Bid'a*. Still, nonetheless, some of the latter-day scholars of *Ahl al-Hadeeth* were critical of Ibn Taimeeya's tactic of engaging *Ahl al-Kalaam*.

Another observation made during this chapter after investigating the literature was that the findings demonstrate the failure of many policy analysts and writers to distinguish between the tenets of *Salafism* and *jihaadism* and why it is necessary to do so. In addition, this chapter also highlighted some of the core doctrine of *takfeeree-jihaadee* groups by contrasting their views with that of *Salafees*. This was done to demonstrate the different approaches of *Salafees* and the contemporary groups associated with *Salafism* that espouse violence. For example, *Salafee da'wa* efforts are concentrated on propagating the faith and rebuking what they perceive as unorthodox beliefs. *Jihaadees*, on the other hand, concentrate their efforts on regime change, political conflict, and violence, as the survey of ISIS's literature suggests.

Chapter two further documented the differences in methodology between groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, groups that both define themselves as being *Salafist*. The evidence showed that the extremist rhetoric and violence of those groups was in stark contrast with the pacifist apolitical nature of *Salafism*. Concepts like *jihad*, *takfeer*, and methodological approaches to *da'wa* were heterogeneous. *Jihadists* aim to spread an ideology based upon violence to wreak havoc on existing order, whereas *Salafees* seek to morally transform it. The blurring of the *Salafee manhaj* with violent *takfeeree* ideology constitutes an example of a key dilemma in this research. These inherent tensions were explored in this chapter and the finer details that distinguish *Salafism* from *takfeerism*, were addressed. The association of *Salafism* with *takfeerism* and *jihadism* affects the way policy makers and academics approach counter extremism policy, and whom they designate as violent religious extremists. This is both counter productive and harmful to counter-radicalization efforts, in fact it can lead to further alienation of *Salafees* with the potential to radicalize religiously immature youth.

Chapter three sought to explore the role of modernism as an antithesis to *Salafist* interpretation and how modernist appraisals of *Salafism* are some of the most severe due to divergent interpretative discourse. Most modernists view *Salafees* and their methodology as being at the core of extremism. One of the central claims of critics of *Salafism* is that it does not accommodate pluralism and *ijtihad*, and that it is too rigid, thus inept to deal with contemporary issues. For modernists, Islam is broad-based allowing for diverse interpretations of the religion. Also, there is an inherent tension in the two approaches: *Salafees* analyze the past for contemporary solutions whereas modernists seek to reform the religion to adapt to contemporary realities. Moreover, the chapter concluded that most contemporary Western research of *Salafism* is heavily dependent upon Wiktorowicz's model, which classifies *Salafees* into three overlapping categories: pacifists, politicians, and violent *jihadists*. This research analyzed this classification and its core premises, highlighting the inherent flaws of lumping together divergent movements, which do not share a common *manhaj* nor aim; although many of the basic tenets of creed

and methodology of textual interpretation do overlap. The implication of lumping together such diverse trends is that policy makers and academics can overgeneralize, thus inaccurately fail to target potential violent extremists while alienating *Salafees* who have shown to be antithetical to extremists.

By exploring the main tenets of the *Salafee* creed, *manhaj*, and *da'wa* this research has highlighted the differences between *jihaadee-takfeeree* groups, and the *Salafee da'wa*. It was essential to explore those differences to show that they were indeed substantial and meaningful distinctions warranting reanalysis of Wiktorowicz's classification. Another reason for questioning his analysis and categorization of the data was to show *Salafees* should not be a primary focus of policy makers as proponents of violence.

The chapter highlighted the inadequacies of Wiktorowicz's categorization and why it is time for a new model, which does not obscure *Salafism* with violent *jihaadists*. The association of *Salafees* with the other two trends Wiktorowicz mentioned presupposes that *Salafees* are one in the same as the *jihaadists*, but just in a latent state of violence. Finally, the chapter ended with a discussion of Wiktorowicz's classification of *Salafism* and why that classification contrasts with how *Salafees* view themselves. An additional reason for reassessing Wiktorowicz's categorization is because so many contemporary studies fail to differentiate *Salafees* from *jihaadees* and depend upon his taxonomy.

In chapter four, *Salafees'* behavior in a liberal democracy was analyzed to illustrate the flexibility of the *Salafee da'wa*, and to show that even under secular and pluralistic societies *Salafees* are not advocates of violence nor do they espouse violent extremist rhetoric. After purveying the data, the findings reveal that *Salafees* do not have a record for violence or espousing violent rhetoric. To the dismay of various critics of *Salafism* there is very little empirical data that shows any definitive link between *Salafees* and violent extremism. On the contrary, there are a growing number of works illustrating that *Salafees* have had a role to play in debunking

extremist ideology and propaganda (Umar 2018). In addition, from the exclusionary nature of their *da'wa* and their inherent hostility towards sectarianism and aberrations in the religion, there are no indications that they will not continue to play a leading role in confronting violent extremists and countering their ideology.

Policy makers, counter terrorism practitioners, and academics are all perplexed by the rise in violent extremism. How to mitigate the process of radicalization has become a top policy priority in many Western democracies. Chapter five, sought to analyze the process of contemporary trends in extremist recruitment. It also questioned and analyzed what makes an efficient and effective counter-narrative to extremism and the role of *Salafees* in that process. One unexpected result of the literature review was the potential problem of weak *Salafees* transitioning to radicalism. In the case of Baker's study new converts in the immature phase of spiritual development were evaluated and their experiences moving away from or transitioning towards radicalism was chronicled. Baker's analysis illustrated that some converts who had not learned and become sufficiently grounded in the *manhaj* had shown the propensity to transition to violent extremism; however, this was in very few isolated cases. Majority of Baker's case studies showed extremists transitioning to *Salafism* (2009). Overall, these anomalies did not significantly impact the hypothesis that *Salafees* are an antidote to extremism rather than its cause. This chapter also sought to outline some of the criteria of an effective counter-narrative. Issues like credibility of the messenger, ability to engage the target audience, and strength of the counter-narrative were all used as criterion. Some academics like Jacobson suggest an effective counter extremist message should seek to undermine extremist leadership, highlight civilian casualties, point to the difficulties of the lifestyle of a terrorist, and their tendency to engage in criminal activities. Chapter five also put forth the core arguments of the cynics of *Salafism* and their skepticism of partnering with *Salafees* in counter extremism. The primary argument of critics is that *Salafees* themselves are extreme and should not be abetted in anyway even if there appears to be a common good. Still others query:

How effective are the Salafi [*sic*] arguments against violent extremism? There is no easy answer to this critical question. For example, all the various Salafi [*sic*] arguments did not convince Muhammad Yusuf to abandon his ideas, nor have his followers stopped their indiscriminate violence. However, the failure to convince Boko Haram combatants should not be the only indication of the effectiveness of Salafi [*sic*] counter-violent extremism. Equally relevant is the contribution of the discourses of counter-violent extremism in strengthening the resilience of the vast majority who are not violent extremists (Umar 2018:13).

Umar's observation encapsulates the dilemma of counter extremism efforts and a valid critique of *Salafee* efforts in Nigeria. However, this research does not hypothesize that *Salafees* offer the only method for countering extremists, nor does it argue that they are one hundred percent effective. Rather that *Salafees* do offer important counter-narratives, which at times influence potential radicals and help to exploit the weakness of violent narratives using sacred texts to debunk extremist ideology in the eyes of the masses. "Muslims need to hear these rebuttals against arguments quoting the Qur'an and Hadith [*sic*] to support violent extremism. Thus, one clear policy recommendation should be the mass popularization of these counter-radical narratives through the mass media..." (Umar 2018:13). Although Umar is critical of *Salafees'* role he also acknowledges the importance of their counter-narratives as antidotes to extremism and that they should be endorsed.

Furthermore, many proponents of *Salafees'* efficiency in confronting radicalism claim that *Salafees* are generally the most effective in confronting extremists, understanding their ideology, and debunking their narratives. One of the challenges discovered during the literature review was measuring how effective *Salafee* narratives are in debunking extremist messaging and engaging the target audience.

The data accumulated during the course of this study shows that a part of fostering academic integrity is gaining accurate information. "A key principle in policy formulation is to strip away impediments to honest discourse" (Wimhurst 2016:14). To accurately gage *Salafees'* role as an antidote to extremism precise data of *Salafism* was needed, thus the necessity for this research. This research helped to

fill the gap in literature by providing essential knowledge about *Salafism* from an inside perspective.

This research was undertaken to determine if *Salafism* is an antidote to extremism, and how *Salafees* address radicalism. This study's findings can serve as a resource for both academics and policy makers and as an educational tool about *Salafism* and its relationship to violent extremism. In addition, the study provides useful data for counter extremism practitioners and offers tools to help problem solve.

This study distinguishes itself from other studies of contemporary *Salafism* in that it offers an insider perspective, makes use of a plethora of contemporary *Salafee* texts, as well as the numerous sources of their critics. This research analyzes *Salafism* with the aim of clarifying their *da'wa* by discerning its fundamental doctrines from those of other contemporary groups. While many academics still maintain that *Salafism* is a source of violent extremism and inseparable from contemporary *jihaadee* movements, it is hoped that this research has helped to disprove some of these underlying assumptions. However still, critics like Wimhurst maintain, "Attempts to uncouple Salafi-jihadism [sic] from Islam are not only intellectually dishonest, they have consequences strategically. The more obvious issue is a failure to identify the problem" (2016:14). Increasingly accurate data will hopefully help to dispel the association of violent *jihaadism* with *Salafism* that Wimhurst suggests in order to precisely frame the problem and target practical solutions, so while Wimhurst argues that it is more academically honest to make the association of *Salafism* and *jihaadism* this research contends the opposite. There is clearly a need for more accurate data about *Salafism* and the radicalization process. In this light, McKenzie claims, "The lack of empirical knowledge about the root causes and drivers of violent extremism (means)... CVE efforts are mostly designed and funded on the basis of anecdotal evidence, with unknown results" (McKenzie 2016:2). This is especially the case in Western democracies where Muslims are often viewed as a potential security threat and *Salafism* is thought to be the underlying ideology.

It goes without saying that alienating an entire religious community undermines American principles and values. Worse yet, this alienation itself could very well spur radicalization, thereby undermining not only our principles and values but also our security. Therefore, it is not inconceivable that an alienating CVE agenda could in fact create the very problem it sets out to solve (McKenzie 2016:13).

Many of those who are radicalized, especially in the case of ISIS recruits, have been radicalized online by encountering extremist literature and propaganda. Therefore, attributing extremism to *Salafism*, and worse yet, to Islam as a faith, only further muddles policy objectives and isolates the Muslim community. “In other words, there is no clear nexus between a particular city, neighborhood, mosque, or community center and violent extremism in America. Yet, the current CVE agenda suggests otherwise” ((McKenzie 2016:4). This highlights the need for more accurate data about violent extremism and where to target resources and efforts to combat radicalization. More recent studies indicate that in the case of many EU nations, where most Western ISIS recruits come from, a failure to integrate second generational Muslims is a large factor resulting in the success of *Jihaadist* recruitment. Reinares asserts, “A generalized identity crisis among young, second-generation descendants of immigrant Muslims in Western Europe’s wealthiest countries appears then to lie behind the most recent unprecedented jihadist [*sic*] mobilisation.” (2017:72). Reinares goes on to claim that *Salafism*, and policy failure of Western democracies have further isolated many of these youths and prevented them from integrating. “Salafism as a rigorist understanding of the Qur’an and the Hadith [*sic*] leads its followers to believe that liberal democracy is haram [*sic*] or prohibited from an Islamic perspective, that there is an intrinsic incompatibility between Islam and democracy, and that Muslims living in majority non-Muslim countries should actually resist social integration...” (2017:73). This researcher has acknowledged that *Salafees*, in principle, reject democratic values; however, as the data suggests, they are not advocates of violence.

A main premise of this research was to show that *jihaadism* and *takfeerism* should be divorced from *Salafism* and that those trends are present in a wide array of sects and groups, which at times espouse violence as a solution to current political unrest.

In this regard Wimhurst states:

It is self-evident that understanding the legitimate jurisprudential sources of Salafi-jihadism [*sic*] is central to the shaping of counter-ideological strategies both politically, and in policing and counter-terrorism. Additionally, a failure to acknowledge the Islamic legitimacy of this ideology has the potential to further frustrate Muslims seeking to give expression to their political concerns (Wimhurst 2016:14).

It appears Wimhurst is speaking to the danger of alienating Muslims by categorizing them all as security threats, although he maintains an association between *Salafism* and *jihaadism*, which according to this research, is equally misleading with serious consequences.

This does not mean that politicians should not champion progressive, Western liberal interpretations of Islam. Rather, they should do so in a manner that is fully informed. They should do so knowing that they are advocating reform, not orthodoxy. Policies that advocate for a revisionist, subjective view of history will always lack credibility—especially regarding the history of a religion of which the authors have no membership or apparent knowledge. (Wimhurst 2016:14).

The inherent tension for policy makers is how to promote one sect that is more aligned with the state's values over another. Many pundits suggest that those groups that uphold progressive liberal values should become partners in counter terrorism; however, as this study has shown, they also acknowledge those secular ideologues often lack credibility.

Still some academics believe that to confront domestic terrorism and extremism governments will need to focus on individual approaches to extremism instead of faith-based approaches, which continue to isolate Muslims (McKenzie 2016). The dilemma *Salafees* face is that they often find themselves targeted or scrutinized by Western intelligence agencies, which often operate according to Wiktorowicz's categorization of *Salafism*. This bias then serves to muddy sound data analysis that only makes it more difficult to disrupt the radicalization process. It is hoped that the results of this research will help to prevent blaming *Salafees* for violent extremism,

thus hindering further alienation of *Salafees*. Moreover, this research has highlighted that isolationism tends to be a factor in encouraging individuals to radicalize by alienating them and causing them to be increasingly insular, thus accelerating the radicalization process.

Key Findings of Research

This thesis set out to analyze whether *Salafee* discourse is an antidote to extremism. The central premise is that *Salafees* offer one of the most effective voices, not the only voice, in countering extremist ideology. The key findings of this research can be summed up as follows:

- *Salafees* have a long tradition in offering rebuttals and refuting *takfeeree* thought stemming from the Companions rebuking of the *Khawaarij*.
- The arguments put forth by *Salafees* to counter extremism are generally acknowledged to be more credible, according to experts, in engaging the extremists' core constituency.
- *Salafees*, although exclusionary, are not proponents of violence and they view their movement as reformist with a consistent methodology to reform Muslim societies.
- The *Salafee manhaj* starkly contrasts with *jihadists'* concepts and worldview.
- *Salafees* devote a lot of material, speeches, and literature to refuting extremists and their ideology.
- *Salafees* present consistent and, notably, some of the most effective counter-narratives to extremists' narratives. However, they require additional promotion of those narratives to enhance effectiveness.
- Some *Salafee* scholars directly confront and engage in debating extremists debunking and disrupting their ideology and, in some cases, disrupting their radicalization efforts.
- *Salafees* are a factor in the counter-radicalization process in the Muslim community and should remain a part of that process.

- Groups like ISIS are not easily defeated because they set out to inspire and leave a legacy of terror and supplant their ideology. *Salafees* also realize the importance of legacy; however, their legacy is predicated upon creed and social reform of Muslim societies through education and *da'wa*.
- Recent events like the downfall of ISIS's so-called caliphate show how strong ideology is in inspiring and indoctrinating future terrorists (Clarke and Ingram 2018:1-2).

Recommendations for Further Research

During this study many equally important areas of research were discovered. The following suggestions are areas of study for important future inquiry.

1. There could have been wider sampling of known *Salafee* websites, mosques, and institutions.
2. There should be further research into looking at concrete solutions to radicalization. Some have suggested that in France for example the prison system actually promoted *Salafism* and that this did not reduce the propensity of inmate radicalization. McKenzie advocates:

Rehabilitation and reintegration programs should also include a structured and systematic mechanism for input and participation from former terrorists. These individuals are important for at least two reasons: first, they can help provide a nuanced, empathetic understanding of the radicalization and de-radicalization process, and second, their firsthand accounts provide powerful narratives in prison programs (2016:9).

3. Additional research should be focused on additional ways *Salafees* can work with counter extremism practitioners especially NGOs, so as not to convolute the relationship between church and state in Western democracies.

4. Also, there is a need for more research into how governments can encourage *Salafees* in their role of producing counter-narratives? Moreover, academics can do more research on *Salafism* based upon the criterion of leading scholars of *Salafism* instead of using antiquated categorizations. It must be acknowledged that there is more and more research and data being collected upon contemporary *Salafism*, which is fundamentally important to understanding the movement and its relation to *jihaadism*; however even these contemporary research papers, conferences, and compilations mostly fail to distinguish between *Salafism* as its own unique trend separate from *jihaadism* and *takfeerism*. While the movement advocating a greater role for *Salafees* in counter extremism is growing, major splits remain between policy pundits of how to address this problem. If *Salafees* begin to play a stronger role and are encouraged to do so by Islamic governments, by allowing them political space, this can be a means for tackling the problem, while all parties maintain legitimacy and integrity.

5. Lastly, there is a need to explore ways *Salafees* can deal with the potential resurgence of ISIS and their propaganda. New evidence suggests that ISIS is preparing for a nostalgic resurgent narrative as a recent RAND report suggests (2018). What are the implications for policy makers? What counter-narratives might *Salafees* produce to help disrupt extremist recruitment? “Counter-narratives seem to address the religious ideas explored in Salafi-jihadi [*sic*] literature more successfully, but still do not prominently tackle about 40 percent of the key ideological concepts of Salafi-jihadism [*sic*]” (Comerford and Bryson 2018:2). More recent evidence suggests that *Salafees* and their counter-narratives do have a role to play in disrupting radicalism.

In conclusion, *Salafees* play a critical role in producing effective counter-narratives to violent extremist thought. The question remains as to how academics, policy

pundits, and counter-terrorism experts can capitalize on those narratives. One of the first priorities of academics and policy makers should be to reassess *Salafism* and existing classifications in order to build a wider consensus on how to approach the problem of extremism in the Muslim community. The data in this research can be a first step in gathering accurate information towards that end. There are also additional steps that *Salafees* can take to counter radicalization since they have a vested interest to do so.

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